

**CHINESE MEDIA'S CHANGING RELATIONS
TO
GOVERNMENT, MARKET AND PUBLIC**

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“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

U.N. Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 19

“Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration.”

**Constitution of People's Republic of China Article 35
(Adopted on December 4, 1982)**

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Summary

This thesis looks into the changing role of the media in China since the initiation of economic reforms in 1978. The media setting has become increasingly complex since due to changes in ownership-structure, the emergence of advertising, and increasing private and foreign investment in the sector. The media situation in China is difficult to categorize, as neither western theories based on liberal thought, nor communist theories, are seen fit for the current socio-political and economic situation in China. China *is* special, with policies based on a communist political system, but with an economy moulded by capitalist ideas and age old Confucian precepts. On the one hand, the media has to abide by its traditional obligations to the Chinese Communist Party and the Government. On the other hand, it responds to the needs of an increasingly capitalist market. Finally, the media is also defined by its relationship with the general public. However, since the Chinese system is historically unique, there is as yet no consensus as to what the media's role should be.

This thesis focuses on the current outlook of the Chinese media. The analysis rests primarily on empirical data from two major events that invoked massive media coverage – the Shanghai 2010 World Expo and the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize – and interviews/conversations with Chinese media professionals. The investigation reveals that there is no sense of separation between the media and the Chinese Government in the Chinese mindset. It becomes apparent that when it comes to ‘positive reporting’ or ‘positive news’, the media serves its purpose impartially of informing the public, the government and the market. However, in the case of politically sensitive information the public is excluded. According to the empirical data presented in this thesis it is fair to state that most Chinese are satisfied with the existing system, including the media. Behind this impression it is also clear that there is considerable diversity in terms of how different socio-economic groups relate to the media. The Chinese Government is bound to become more adaptable, but only to the extent where they still control and own the majority of Chinese media. The media in China today plays several roles; while they carry out the Party's policies, report world news and entertain, at the same time they try to serve as checks for the Government, and a few are trying to set the agenda for future reforms and changes in Chinese society. The media is likely to continue to change and challenge the status quo, and with the internet the Government will continue to be challenged by the public for information.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The motivation for this study developed from my academic background in journalism and East Asian studies, as well as my four years in China, both studying and working in the media field. I wished to combine the theoretical aspects with the practical experience I have gained working and living in China - into my master thesis. The media's role in China is an intriguing matter to investigate and I will explore the media's changing relations to the Party / Government, the market based business and the general public.

As China is playing an increasingly important role in the world, both economically and politically, it is also seen as important to understand various aspects of Chinese society, media being an important one of them. Due to China's way of governance, with one-party-rule and the media largely owned by the Government, it can be argued that the role of the media differs significantly from what is seen as the role of the media in the West¹, where the media is often portrayed as a watch dog over the Government and dominant groups in society. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the media's role in today's Chinese society. On one hand, there are media's traditional obligations to the China Communist Party and the Government, on the other, media's responses to the needs of an increasingly capitalist market, and, finally, there is media's relation to the general public.

1.1. Theme

In the West, in most instances, journalists are considered to be efficient investigators, pushing back screens, peering behind facades and generally being a moral barometer for government and society. In China, most journalists are seen as a part of the Government apparatus. However, it must be noted that most journalists, whether in China, Norway or the United States for that matter, are often a part of a propaganda apparatus without even realizing it. Orwell (1946) writes: "*to be corrupted by totalitarianism, one does not have to live in a totalitarian country*"². Orwell describes how censorship is present in all societies regardless of political nature. In what he refers to as *free societies* censorship is still present, but not as evident as in totalitarian societies. Herman and Chomsky (1988) argue that most journalists are part of a propaganda system, a system of gate-keeping information

¹ The United States, Europe, Australia and Canada

² Orwell, G., 1946 (Online edition)

controlled by the government and the large media organizations. They claim that the news that is being reported to the public has been selected through a *superfilter* controlled by the agenda setters: the government and powerful organizations in the society.³ Therefore one can argue that Edmund Burke's concept of the press as a "*fourth estate*"⁴, the press acting as a watch dog, is not functioning as it should.⁵ This will be further explained in the theory part of this thesis.

Considering these conflicting views, a question can then be raised of whether or not there is such a thing as objective reporting. One theory states that objective reporting indicates decision-making, thus already forcing the journalists to make a choice as to the readers' interest and knowledge. Ideally, journalists should provide representative coverage to all the public, and choose the correct time to report facts, present an interpretation or opinion.⁶ But who actually sets the news agenda in today's society? Is it the public, the journalists, the editors, the advertisers, the owners of the media organizations, the politicians in power or the dominant and leading business organizations and industries? In China, the media setting has become increasingly complex in the last decades due to changes in ownership-structure, the emergence of advertising and the rise in private and foreign investment. However, the question of whether the news reported by the Chinese media still comes from central knowledge dictated by the state's political and ideological structures in party-organ style remains.

Furthermore one can ask whether the Chinese media tends to serve the state's need for political control rather than to serve the interests of the public; or to put the interest of advertisers and private and foreign investors above those of consumers and readers. The public can be divided into several interest groups in regards to the media, the government and the market. The question of who the media serves is not a predicament found only in China. One can use the recent Murdoch-affair as an example of dilemmas occurring in the West, where the English newspaper, *News of the World* had to close down after a phone hacking scandal.⁷ One can ask whether or not this ruthless style of reporting is a result of

³ Herman, E., S. and Chomsky, N., 1988

⁴ The fourth power after executive, legislature and judiciary

⁵ www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/index.html

⁶ Hurst, J., 1991

⁷ http://articles.cnn.com/2011-07-10/world/uk.phonehacking_1_andy-coulson-news-international-ed-miliband?_s=PM:WORLD

the increasingly competitive news market or if it responds to the public's demand for a certain type of news? The scandal not only led to the closing of the newspaper, but it also led to an ongoing investigation about the "*ethics and standards of British journalists*".⁸ In China's case the question is whether there is a contradiction between the state's, the public's and the market's needs when it comes to the role of the media. This thesis intends to examine selected media theories and apply them to the Chinese media situation since 1978, empirically illustrated by how two major events (the World Expo 2010 and the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize) were covered in the media, and interviews with a sample of media professionals, reflecting their opinions on key media dimensions.

1.2. Research questions

Between 1949 and 1979, the media's role in the People's Republic of China (PRC) was basically to communicate the Party's policy to the people. Along with the economic and social changes that occurred in Chinese society since the late 1970s, the media's role has changed, not least because of its function in the emerging market economy. Therefore, the overall research question to be answered is:

How has the Chinese media changed since 1978?

In order to answer this question, the following sub-questions will be addressed:

- 1) How have the media's relations to the Government/the CCP changed?
- 2) How have the media's relations to the general public changed?
- 3) How have the media's relations to the market changed along with the economic reforms since 1978?

In the next section the procedure used for gathering the information required in order to answer these questions is briefly presented.

⁸ http://articles.cnn.com/2011-07-10/world/uk.phonehacking_1_andy-coulson-news-international-ed-miliband?_s=PM:WORLD

1.3. Methodology Approach

In order to find relevant information and therefore be able to answer the research questions, this thesis intends to use multiple methods such as literature reviews, content analysis of mass media, interviews with a sample of media players, and an analysis of two major events that was covered in the Chinese media, The Shanghai World Expo 2010 and the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. These two cases will be briefly examined in terms of how they have been handled in one national and one regional media. The two chosen media - Shanghai Daily⁹ and Xinhua News Agency¹⁰ - were selected based on their relevance and size, availability online and English language-reporting. The articles included in the analysis have been selected based on their political tone and relevance to the research questions.

Information from interviews with key players in a number of Chinese media has been systematized in tables in accordance with four main topics of conversation; *CCP influence on daily work; Instructions given by the Government; Punishments; and Thoughts on current media system*. The answers are consciously written as quotes in order for the reader to get the precise tone of the interviewees' responses. Since the interviews are based on topics of conversation they do not follow a specified interview guide. The media professionals are selected because they represent a wide range of Chinese media, thus reflecting today's media landscape in China: Shanghai Daily, Xinhua News Agency, China

⁹ Established in 1999, English-language newspaper in Shanghai and the Yangtze River Delta region. Business-focused, but also reports on social, cultural and diplomatic developments in Shanghai, China and world news. Circulation 85000 +

¹⁰ Founded in 1931, has more than 100 bureaus worldwide that has the dual role of both collecting information on world affairs and offer information about China. Xinhua reports directly to the Communist Party of China's Publicity and Public Information Departments. In 1997 Xinhuanet was launched, and today provides news in six languages, reaching around 200 countries, and according to their net page has around 80 million page views per day.

Central Television¹¹, Shanghai Media Group¹², 21st China Business Herald¹³, China Daily¹⁴, QQ / Tencent¹⁵ and Phoenix Television¹⁶.

With this as a backdrop an assumption was made prior to further investigating the topic.

1.4. Assumptions

When examining the abovementioned literature and empirical data, this thesis will argue that in order to understand the role of the Chinese media in the current society, one has to have some knowledge of the traditional role of the media in China and of the socio-political changes that have taken place over the last 30 years. It is also important to bear in mind that the concept of *media* is a construction of the West. This is particularly obvious in international media studies of China, where Western theories are frequently used as a backdrop for studying the post-reform Chinese media sphere. Similarly, the former Soviet Union is commonly used as a backdrop for media studies in communist countries. In both cases certain difficulties emerge when directly applying international theories to China. For instance, these theories do not acknowledge the differences between the former Soviet Union and the PRC, ignoring the unique situation experienced by China and the media after 1949. Tension between the Chinese mindset, fundamental conflicts between systems of ideas, such as Confucianism and western thoughts and philosophy, play an important role when trying to understand Chinese media.

When examining the journalistic discourses and media theories through the examples of the World Expo 2010 and the 2010 Nobel Prize, this thesis assumes that the function of the

¹¹ The state television broadcaster in mainland China and is one of the most important news broadcast companies in China. CCTV has a network of 19 channels broadcasting, is accessible to approximately one billion viewers. This station is one of the official outlets of the Chinese government, and reports directly to high-level officials in the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party of China.

¹² A multimedia television and radio broadcasting, news and Internet company. SMG was formed in 2001 after a merger between the People's Radio Station of Shanghai, East Radio Shanghai, Shanghai Television Station and Oriental Television Station.

¹³ The main product of 21st Century News Group which is China's leading financial media group. It is a Chinese language international daily newspaper with headquarter in Guangzhou with branches in the major Chinese cities. Circulation 762,000 +

¹⁴ Established in 1981, first national English newspaper in China. Circulation 300.000 +. Have an open goal to act as a mouth piece for the Party, reflects the CCP's foreign policy.

¹⁵ Founded in 1998 and is China's largest and most used Internet service portal, provides news as well as entertainment. In 2010 there were 636 million active QQ users.

¹⁶ A Hong Kong-based Mandarin Chinese television broadcaster. Good relations with the PRC government, but non-government related. Available in mainland China to all and is sometimes given freedom to broadcast information not covered by the government media.

media in China is quite different from the purpose of media in the West. From a strict western point of view it may look like the media in China is in some ways misleading the public by just presenting what is wanted by the Government. However, it is important to bear in mind that the media sphere in China today is, like the PRC itself, relatively young compared to western nations' media and institutions. It is likely that changes will continue to occur in the media along with other national policy modifications and changes. In particular it is assumed that the increasingly powerful market economy will have a marked influence on the media, and, may affect relations between both media and Government, and between media and the general public.

1.5. Structure of the thesis

The second chapter of the study will introduce the theoretical framework and media theories. These theories were selected due to their relevance for the research topic, and their importance in the field of journalism. The theories presented will provide the context for discussing the media's role in China since 1978. In the third chapter the Chinese media is placed in a historical context, with emphasis on the post-1978 media setting. In order to get a more representative impression of the media today, two media cases have been selected for examination and analysis, and they are presented in Chapter 4 alongside the interviews. In Chapter 5 the findings and analysis of the empirical data will be compared with the assumptions. The sixth and final chapter provides the concluding remarks.

1.6. Delimitation and limitations

The focus of the examination is the media situation in mainland China, not including Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao. Despite delimiting this study to mainland China it is, however, interesting to look at an alternative case which by comparison can help contextualize the analysis. Therefore this study briefly presents the media situation in South Korea where there are and have been similarities in the media's role in the two countries. The deliberate delimitation in the scope of the analysis is due to the relevance for this study on the media's role in relation to the CCP, the general public and the market. A limitation may be that the research is based mainly on literature in English, and due to this there might be literature that has not been available for examination, such as relevant articles in Chinese

and Russian. It is also acknowledged that the outcome of the interview data could have been dissimilar if the interview objects had been different.

In the next chapter, the thesis will present the theoretical framework, taking a step back from China and giving an overview of international, western theories of media. Such an overview is necessary in order to highlight the specific viewpoint many western critiques apply when doing their analysis of Chinese media. This section will also look at thoughts on the media's role from a Leninist, Marxist and Maoist view, and later try to see how these have been applied to Chinese society after 1978.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will present selected media theories, which are relevant to the purpose of this study and are particularly significant for the field. These theories are seen as applicable to the focus of the thesis on the Chinese media sector and its role in the Chinese society. It is important to set a solid background for analyzing the role of the media by presenting both western theories and theories on media in Communist countries. The different approaches will illustrate how the media's role differs in relation to the government, the market and the public in different settings. One can claim that the modern, western notion of a free press that emerged in the 19th century was a result of continuous social processes, starting in the 17th century.¹⁷ Many western theories hold the viewpoint that a liberal democratic society is the optimal democracy, and that a free press is a natural part of such societies. The media and the role of journalists are generally contextualized in a western setting, and thus such theories have limited applicability in China.

2.1. Western theories on the role of media

The role of the media has been discussed from various points of view, from those that claim the media should impartially enlighten the public to those that believe that most media is a part of government's propaganda apparatus, or conversely that the media should question the intentions of government's and large organizations.

Lippman's theory, stated in his book *Public Opinion* (1922), calls for the need of journalists as the truth-seeking elite. The media should, through their knowledge, enlighten the public and thus actively shape public opinion. He writes that the common people cannot themselves analyze news they do not have background information on, they are not able to see what is in their interest or not. Lippman claims that in most cases people are incapable of getting the facts right themselves, due to the complexity of the world.¹⁸ He writes:

*"For the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage with it."*¹⁹

¹⁷ http://journalismethics.info/media_law/history_of_free_press.htm

¹⁸ Lippman, W., 1922

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p: 19

Therefore we need *experts* to guide the public, to discern the correct facts and situations. However this is not just the media's role. The media itself needs to be informed by *experts* working for various organizations, companies and the government. If not, the media is given way too much freedom in forming the public opinion.²⁰ Lippman's theory remains significant in studies of the role of the media, and in China's context one can see signs that the Chinese Government has appointed themselves as the *experts*. If this is the case, the Chinese Government controls the news reported to the public. This kind of situation is in direct opposition to the other end of the spectrum of media theories. For instance, Dewey (1927) insists that the public should decide what news is important for them, and the journalists should then pick up on that, and report that news.²¹ This is similar to modern news-reporting values, stating that the role of the media is to bridge 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Journalists should ideally be honest people, in possession of knowledge beyond that of the general public, obtained objectively through interviews and sources. This knowledge should then be reported to the public as objectively as possible. There are four fundamental principles in journalism: honesty, fairness, independence and respect.²² Ideal journalism should combine descriptive accounts and analysis. Media professionalism can be defined as a commitment to claims of objectivity, balance and ideological neutrality.²³ Regardless of the code of ethics for journalists, there are those that claim that journalists can never be fully objective.²⁴ That the journalist's objectivity gets affected by the audience, their interests and who the readers are.

Obviously journalists are not the only agenda setters, some even claim they are misled into believing they are, but are in fact playing by someone else's rules; the government and the owners. Herman and Chomsky (1988) argue that the media is part of a propaganda system, saying that the mass media guides the general public with the correct "*values, beliefs, and codes behavior*"²⁵ set by the government and the large media organizations, that will help integrate the public "*into the institutional structures of the larger society.*"²⁶ The propaganda model, the authors claim, exists all over the world, though more easily

²⁰ Lippman W., 1922

²¹ Lecture: On Dewey and journalism, University of Technology Sydney used by Professor Penny O'Donnell, 27 August 2003

²² <http://www.australian-news.com.au/codethics.htm>

²³ Lee, C., C., 1994,

²⁴ Hurst, J., 1991

²⁵ Herman, E., S. and Chomsky, N., 1988, p: 1

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p: 1

recognized in countries and societies where there is a state monopoly of the media. But it is also noticeable in countries where the media is private and seemingly independent (this is similar to what Orwell wrote in 1946). In the former, formal censorship is openly acknowledged, while in the latter censorship is seemingly absent.²⁷ The propaganda model is a means of disguising and maintaining the inequality of wealth and power in a society, it allows government and large private interests to decide what messages/news should be reported to the public. Five news filters are identified, basically sorting out which news to be presented to the audience. They are: *Size, ownership, and profit orientation of the mass media; The advertising license to do business; Sourcing Mass-Media News; Flak and the Enforces; and Anticommunism as a control mechanism.*²⁸ The news which ends up being reported has passed through this *superfilter*, not controlled by the media, but by the government and other powerful organizations and groups in society. The five filters *skim* the information that *passes through the gates*, and construct limitations as to what becomes news. Thus, what becomes news is already filtered before reaching the media, and in a way the mass media do not themselves decide on the content they pass on to the public. Events, news, happenings (negative and positive), news about people, and groups that are seen as less important by the ruling government and their ideology are often filtered out and never reported.²⁹ If this is the case, the propaganda model not only filters out potential important news, but the grounds for interpretation and objective reporting is already decided upon by the dominating elite. Herman and Chomsky (1988) write that many journalists believe that they are objectively reporting on news and are working within the rules of professional news values and reporting (as mentioned earlier: honesty, fairness, independence and respect).³⁰ In China, due to the one-party-rule, as opposed to western democratic countries, the Party has a stronger role in defining the news. This point will be further elaborated on in Chapter 5.

The concept of a “*fourth estate*”, first used in the discussion on the role of the media by Edmund Burke³¹ in 1787 in Britain, is important in the discussion of media theories. Behind the concept of the media as a *fourth estate* is the notion that the media represents

²⁷ Herman, E., S. and Chomsky, N., 1988

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

wardens of democracy, its main role being to look after the public's interest. The concept of the media as a *fourth estate* can only be imagined in liberal democratic countries, and is in most cases not applicable in the Chinese media setting.³² This concept represents an ideal form of journalism which is not applicable to all modern societies, neither in the West nor in China. It is also important to note that media in the West is not always operating in the public's interest, but is also bound by regulatory frames and various interests of owners/advertisers/investors.

The next section will examine media from a communist perspective.

2.2. Media from a Communist perspective

The media theories described in 2.1. are in most cases based on western ideas, whereas in this section, the thesis will look at media from different perspectives – Marxist, Communist, Leninist and Maoist. The classic communist ideology states that, in a communist society the individual's interest is basically the same as society's interest. So in a sense the need for individual freedom ceases. However, Marx actually defends the right to freedom of the press, writing that censorship was an instrument created by the bourgeois elite as a tool to dominate the weak.³³ This will be elaborated on in section 3.4. - Media's role after a successful revolution.

In Lenin's collected works one can find some interesting views on the media's role during a revolution or in a communist society. He writes in *Terms of Admission into Communist International* (published in 1921 in *The Second Congress of the Communist International, Verbatim Report*) that the daily media and propaganda should all be "*genuinely communist in character*"³⁴. All the press organs that belong to the Party "*must be edited by reliable Communists who have given proof of their devotion to the cause of the proletarian revolution*". The communist thought "*should be popularised in such a way that the practical facts systematically dealt with in our press day by day will drive home to every*

³¹ Edmund Burke (1729 – 1797) born in Dublin. He was a politician and political thinker of 18th century in Britain. He is seen as the father of modern conservatism, and representative of classical liberalism.

(<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/burke.html> / <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/burke/>)

³² www.cultsock.org/index.php?page=media/4estate.html

³³ <http://www-cs-faculty.stanford.edu/~eroberts/cs201/projects/communism-computing-china/censorship.html>

³⁴ www.marx.org: Terms of Admission into Communist International (1920), Lenin's Collected Works

rank-and-file working man and working woman, every soldier and peasant, that it is indispensable to them.”³⁵ The media in his view seems to be a propaganda apparatus serving the Party, enlightening and informing the public on the status quo and the Party’s plans, visions and ideology. However, it seems fair to wonder if Lenin’s view on the media changed along with his historically changing roles, from, first, a radical political dissident to, later, a state leader.

Mao’s opinions of the media are not too far from Lenin’s. In 1948, Chairman Mao Zedong stated in a speech: *“The role and power of the newspapers consist in their ability to bring the Party program, the Party line, the Party’s general and specific policies, its tasks and methods of work before the masses in the quickest and most extensive way”*.³⁶ In an interview with an American journalist in 1944, Mao claimed the Party also used the media to reveal the opinions of the people:

*“We listen to the people. Through the media of popular meetings in villages, towns, districts, regions, and everywhere in our territories; through individual conversations between party members and men and women of all strata of the population; through special conferences, newspapers, and the telegrams and letters we receive from the people - through all this we can, and do, always find out the real, undisguised opinion of the masses.”*³⁷

The media was to spread positive news and encourage the masses. But only a few years after the revolution, Mao claimed the press had been wrongly used in China during the 1950s.³⁸

*“Since the beginning of this year (1956) there has been one-sided and unrealistic propaganda in the press for improving the people’s livelihood, but very little publicity has been given to building the country through diligence and thrift, combating extravagance and waste and encouraging hard work, plain living and sharing weal and woe with the masses, which should from now on be the focus of our propaganda in the press.”*³⁹

He called for the necessity to meet with the press, and as he puts it, *“to exchange views with them and inform them of the guiding principles in our propaganda.”*⁴⁰ For Mao, it seems as if the media was a direct tool for the Party to communicate their policies and ideology to the masses.

³⁵ www.marx.org: Terms of Admission into Communist International (1920), Lenin’s Collected Works

³⁶ Winfield, H., B., and Peng, Z., 2006, p: 266

³⁷ www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

There has been a number of theories on the media's role in Communist countries, and one of the most significant is the "*Soviet Communist Theory of the press*" formulated by Schramm in 1964.⁴¹ The theory was unchallenged for decades and used as the theoretical framework for the press system in China, the Soviet Union and other self-claimed Communist and Marxist nations. The theory takes the press in former Soviet as its main focus of examination and the basic conclusion is that the Soviet communist media was "*anti-professional and anti-commercial as they were used instrumentally by the communist party state for various political purposes, particularly as propaganda tools.*"⁴² It claims that the media had a single purpose: to serve the party.⁴³ This theory has also been accepted by the Chinese journalism community, and Schramm has been described as the "*father of communication study*".⁴⁴ Schramm died in 1987, giving him no opportunity to modify his theories according to the modernization and development in China.

However in 1984, in the "*Marxist approach*", Altschull criticized the "*Soviet Communist Theory*" by calling it ideologically biased.^{45 46} He identified three categories in which the media could be placed: media promoting the market, communitarian media, and media for advancing public opinion. He argued that media was trying to serve the public. Altschull claimed that the media focused on neutrality, but was actually promoting and supporting capitalism.⁴⁷ The two media theories on Communist and Marxist models both use former Soviet as case studies, and are considered outdated in relation to today's China.

2.3. Summing up the literature review

A variety of media theories has been described above in order to be able to more clearly understand the suggested, interpreted and changing role of the media, both in Western and Communist societies. During the 1980s and early 1990s, literature from Chinese universities suggested that China had moved from communism into "*postcommunist neoauthoritarian*"⁴⁸ under the market economy with Chinese characteristics. The Chinese news media no longer had the single purpose of communication, as it went beyond

⁴¹ Schramm, W., 1964

⁴² Huang, C., 2003, p: 445

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p: 445

⁴⁵ Altschull, J., H., 1984

⁴⁶ Huang, C., 2003

⁴⁷ Ostini, J., and Fung, H., Y., A., 2002

⁴⁸ Huang, C., 2003, p: 444

propaganda to provide news, general information and entertainment.⁴⁹ The theories presented about the media's role range from considering the media as a part of government apparatus, to those that see it as a free actor in society, a voice for the masses, and to promoting market forces. Whatever role the media has, it is valid to state that in most countries the media is in one way or the other incorporated in the agendas of decision-makers.

2.4. Relating theory review to the research questions

None of the theories above are seen as totally applicable to the Chinese media setting today. The western theories are in most cases based on societies that have developed based on liberal democratic thought, and the media is perceived, most of the time, to be working outside the borders of government control. The "*Soviet Communist Theory*" which has been used to understand media in Marxist or Communist societies⁵⁰, is not applicable in current Chinese society due to the coexistence of a capitalist market system and a communist political system. The theories proposed by Lippman (1922), Altschull (1984), and Herman and Chomsky (1988) support the idea of media in the service of the government, but also leave room for it to cater to the market. Both in Lippmann and Herman and Chomsky, the market, in terms of advertisers and owners, are given decision-making power on the news agenda. Serving solely the public is seen as a utopian illusion, but Dewey, Burke and Hurst put forward solid theories as to how it can be achieved, or at least head in that direction. This will be further discussed in Chapter 4. In the next chapter this essay will account for the history of the Chinese media.

⁴⁹ Huang, C., 2003

⁵⁰ Schramm, W., 1964

3: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CHINESE MEDIA

To understand the various roles the media has played in China since the abolishment of the imperial dynasty, it is important to summarize the history of the media in China. The thesis will focus on the Chinese media after the reforms starting in 1978, when the Chinese media system changed as a direct consequence of the economic reforms. However, it is important to include events prior to 1978 to get a broader understanding of the Chinese society and media development. The media in China has been influenced by history and the socio-economic development, American and western doctrines, Confucianism, as well as Marxism, Leninism, Maoism and Dengism⁵¹.

3.1. Brief introduction to the Chinese media before 1978

The media in the modern western sense did not exist in China before the end of the 1800s. It was built up during the modernization process, influenced by the contact with the European powers at the end of the 19th century, and the main objective for the press was to promote enlightenment, reform and national independence.⁵² However, it is claimed that the oldest newspaper in the world is Chinese, the Peking Gazette (from year 581)⁵³. It was a tool for the Chinese Emperor to communicate instructions to the public.⁵⁴ However, the first journalism school in China was only established in 1918 at the Peking University, where American journalism had a great influence during the formative stage of Chinese journalism education. The link with the United States was maintained until the CCP took over the mainland in 1949.⁵⁵ Xu, Chu and Guo (2002) argue that before the takeover by the Communist Party in 1949 the media tried to follow western style journalism, but from 1949 they changed to the Soviet model⁵⁶, both described in Chapter 2.

⁵¹ Dengism is basically Deng Xiaoping's remarks and thoughts concerning the building of a socialist society that include Chinese characteristics in terms of market-style reform and an open-door policy towards foreign investment. At the 14th Party Congress held in October 1992, Deng's thoughts were transformed to the status of a theory: "Comrade Deng Xiaoping is the chief architect of our socialist reform, of the open door policy and of the modernization program." (Wang, J., 2002)

⁵² Lee, C., C., 1994

⁵³ An official publication by the *Imperial Court* existed in the successive capitals of the Empire since the Sui or Tang dynasty. (The original Imperial Gazette is said to have been published as early as in the Han dynasty around the first century.) The Peking Gazette ceased to publish in 1912 as a result of the fall of the Qing Dynasty. (<http://jimsheng.hubpages.com/hub/The-Oldest-Newspaper-In-The-World>)

⁵⁴ <http://jimsheng.hubpages.com/hub/The-Oldest-Newspaper-In-The-World>

⁵⁵ Greenberg, S., B., and Lau, T., Y., 1990

⁵⁶ Xu, Y., Chu, L., L., and Guo, Z., 2002

However, before the CCP took power in China they had already founded a newspaper (Xiangdao which translates to *Guide*) in 1921, the same year as the founding of the Party. Before 1949 the Party published several newspapers and magazines to generate support for its revolutionary objectives.⁵⁷ Looking back at history, this was more or less the media's role in China until the reform period in the 1970s. It is important to bear in mind that there were several factions within the CCP, with each of them supporting different views, and accordingly, trying to influence the media to gain popular support.

3.2. Chinese media development since 1978

In 1978 Deng Xiaoping initiated the Chinese economic reform program, thus also bringing major changes to China's media system. Along with the launching of the economic reforms, came the call for development and reforms in society and in the political discourse. Before 1978 all media in China was financed and run by the Party/State. Two types of papers existed: the party organs whose sole purpose was to act as a mouthpiece for the Party and under supervision of the Party's propaganda department; and the second was a mixture of non-party publications operating under government entities and social and scientific associations that had licenses to publish their own papers within their field.⁵⁸ This was basically the Soviet system with some minor variations.

As a result of the economic reforms, the press was gradually pushed into managing and operating on a financially self-sufficient basis. Despite this, during the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of the new situation in China and the Dengist approach to Communism, the Chinese media continued to flourish and expand, both in numbers and function. One witnessed a development of the so-called evening papers, an expansion of pages in already existing newspapers, additional weekend editions, joint-venture press, and the emergence of city newspapers.⁵⁹ Though the media was still considered a tool for the Party's ideology, the new economic and cultural roles it played - became more important. A different role for the media emerged, not just to inform but also to entertain for the purpose of selling, and thus survive in the market. Between 1979 and 1989 advertisement grew.⁶⁰ Winfield and Peng (2006) argue that "*the previous totalitarian definition of the media as an*

⁵⁷ Terrell, L., R., 1984

⁵⁸ Roya, A., M., 2004

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

instrument of class struggle was officially dropped".⁶¹ The final and official change came in 1992 at the CCP 14th National Congress, where the central and local governments adopted a new financial policy regarding the media, which basically intended to reduce and finally end press subsidies.⁶² This became the true turning point for the Chinese media as it turned into a business industry and was now restructured to serve both the readers and the advertisers along with the CCP.⁶³ In the last few decades the media's function has changed, from primarily serving the government to also serving the market. However, one could ask if it also really serves the general public? By the mid 1990s the media had financial independence from the Government, and were actually generating big revenues for the national economy. The advertisers provided the necessary conditions for economic support, and the media now began to emphasize business, mass appeal and lifestyle to attract readers.⁶⁴ The Department of Propaganda and the Ministry of Education estimated in their first national conference on journalism in 1983 that more than 250.000 Chinese were working in communication activities and professions though very few of them had actually been educated in the field. With the rapid growth of the Chinese press as illustrated above, a demand for educated journalists emerged. The development of the media landscape, more competition amongst the various publications, and the emergence of more television channels along with the end of subsidies from the State, all facilitated in redefining the function of journalism in China.⁶⁵

Table 1 reproduced from Winfield and Peng (2006) illustrates how the media discourse has changed as a result of the media reforms, though one can put a question mark as to how these changes differ from theory to practice. There are still unclear lines and the Government still plays an important role in deciding what is reported to the public.⁶⁶ Perhaps the unclear lines are part of a well-planned strategy so that the Government can see what works, and how rules and regulations are met by the media, the West and the public, and then change them accordingly.

⁶⁰ Winfield, H., B., and Peng, Z., 2006, p: 259

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p: 259

⁶² Huang, C., 2001

⁶³ Winfield, H., B., and Peng, Z., 2006

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Greenberg, S., B., and Lau, Y., T., 1990

⁶⁶ Winfield, H., B., and Peng, Z., 2006

TABLE 1: Major Changes Brought on by Commercialization of the Media⁶⁷

	PAST	NOW
Ownership	Directly state-owned, highly centralized for all information and distribution	1. In theory and officially, still state-owned 2. Indirect ownership by collective and private businesses
Financial support	Government-funded	Chiefly advertising, circulation, financial investment
Management and editorial personnel	Government appointed	1. Government appoints key leading positions in major state and local government news media. 2. Market hiring for professional management and editorial positions in non-key state media units
Functions of the media	Single functions: Mouthpiece of the Party: Ideological indoctrination	Multiple functions: 1. Mouthpiece of the Party 2. Source for advertising 3. High circulation and audience
Nature of media products	Political and ideological propaganda	Propaganda as well as market commodity
Structure	Party news organs; Highly centralized	Multi-structure: 1. Centralized state mainstream media, 2. Outer circled quasi-government media, 3. Fringe media
Actors	Party and government representatives	Entrepreneurs, media professionals, entertainers, advertisers, semi-official interest groups
Media content	Official government news	News, entertainment, advertising, foreign programs and independently produced programs

The main conclusion one can draw from Table 1 is that the Government has ceased being the only decisive player in the Chinese media. As one can see in the right hand rows there has been a shift in the Government's role and the media appears to have more choices, both in terms of ownership and financial support. Most media in China today is income-driven, and the need for them to attract advertisers is another significant change. As mentioned earlier, there has been a transformation from simply being a government information channel to an entertainment source for the public. Another dilemma for the Chinese Government which has emerged following the media reforms is the increasing slackness of direct control. Prior to the reforms the Government had much more direct control, both politically and ideologically, through direct censorship. With more actors and

⁶⁷ Winfield, H., B., and Peng, Z., 2006, p: 263

international influence in the media landscape, control is now more difficult for the Government to exercise.

Following the changes in ownership, structure and personnel, as well as the transformation of the functions of the media, means of control over the media changed accordingly. In Table 2 there are examples of how the political and ideological control has changed, alongside economic, institutional, legal and administrative changes.

TABLE 2, Government Controls: Old and New ⁶⁸

	PAST	PRESENT
Political and ideological control	Censorship, punishment, fines, imprisonment	Government censorship, self-censorship, access blocking
Economic control	Ownership, funding	State monopoly, conglomeration
Institutional control	Party propaganda, department for overall control	Bureaucratization of media regulation agencies. The State Council Information Office, The State Press and Publication Administration
Legal control	Constitution, state laws	Constitution, state laws, civil laws, liberal and privacy
Administrative control	Personnel appointment	Personnel appointment, certificate for journalists, guidelines for yes and no

Prior to the reforms the Party had a more direct form of control over the media, naturally because they were its sole benefactor. After the changes illustrated in Table 1, the control of the media was adjusted to meet the new media setting characterized by different ownership structures and the emerging role of the media as an entertainment channel. Government control mechanisms endure, but they seem to be more subtle than in the past. It is obvious that the Government has control over the media to some extent, especially through the legal overseeing of media institutions. All media businesses, including internet portals have to be approved by a government regulation agency. In the past the Government could appoint the editors-in-chief and the heads of media organizations, however now this is seldom exercised due to the changes in ownership structure.⁶⁹ Another new factor is the responsibility placed on the individual media personnel. To a higher degree than before, those working in the media environment have to self-regulate/censor

⁶⁸ Winfield, H., B., and Peng, Z., 2006, p: 264

⁶⁹ Information obtained through interviews

their contributions. There are fines for overstepping the rules and regulations. This will be further looked upon in 4.2 – Interviews, and Chapter 5.

A different issue that emerged in the context of the remaining state monopoly of the media was widespread corruption. An example is the mining accident in Shanxi province in 2002 when journalists were paid not to report the accident, and not to reveal anything to the public via media channels. *Asia Times* writes about the event: “*the issue of journalistic ethics is a chronic problem in China and the cover-up scandal that happened in Shanxi is just the tip of an ugly iceberg of corruption in Chinese journalism.*”⁷⁰ *China Daily* supported the severe accusation: “*unprofessional journalists by no means exist in small numbers*”.⁷¹ Huang (2007) claims that state monopoly, the lack of a watchdog mechanism and the absence of a media law are contributing to the corruption in the Chinese media.⁷² Since 1949 and up to the 1980s the state was the sole owner and investor in the media industry, allowing no private or foreign ownership, or any investment from state owned enterprises (SOEs) unrelated to the media sector.⁷³ Therefore, even though there had been market-oriented reforms in all other industries in China, up to the 1990s the media industry was still resolutely a state monopoly.

Today China has more than 2000 newspapers, 200 TV channels, 9000 magazines and 450 radio stations.⁷⁴ They are categorized into three groups by Winfield and Peng (2006):

- 1) Official mainstream media; state news organizations directly owned and operated by the government.
- 2) The outer circle; trade papers and various regional media.
- 3) Fringe media; new media organizations founded after 1978, financially and administratively independent from the Government.⁷⁵

With this as a backdrop Peng and Winfield (2006) argue that the Chinese media plays a dual role: “*Despite the fact that officially the media’s role is still defined as the government’s voice, the economic structure means they must accommodate the interests of their advertisers and their audiences.*”⁷⁶ After the market-oriented reforms the SOEs were

⁷⁰ Huang, C., 2007, p: 417

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p: 417

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Dagens Næringsliv, 10.01.2007

⁷⁵ Winfield, H., B., and Peng, Z., 2006, p: 261

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p: 261-262

in direct competition with the new emerging private businesses. Huang (2007) writes: *“There is no doubt that the market socialism model contributed greatly to the sector’s transition from a traditional Communist propaganda-oriented model to an audience-oriented model.”*⁷⁷ The ongoing commercialization of the media made it impossible for the Government not to adopt freer and more flexible media control.

However, the increasing changes in Chinese society per se and the fact that most media organizations were losing money persuaded the Government to the search for new media reforms. *“Beijing adopted a largely wait-and-see strategy or muddling-through policy, scrutinizing the possible impact of non-state investment in the government-monopolized media sector, on the one hand, and studying possible policy responses, on the other hand”*, writes Huang (2007).⁷⁸ Only a few weeks before China’s accession to the WTO in 2001, the Hong Kong-based Phoenix Television (co-owned by Rupert Murdoch’s Star Group and Chinese capital) was granted permission to directly broadcast non-news programs to cable television in Guangdong province. This marked the beginning of the relaxation towards foreign-owned media presence in China. In the next few weeks and months several similar permissions were granted to other outlets such as the China Entertainment Television (CETV), and an additional agreement was made between Murdoch’s Star Group, CCTV and Guangdong Cable TV Network. Star Group was to provide Mandarin-language general entertainment channel to cable systems in Guangdong, and Murdoch’s News Corp’s Fox Cable Networks was to distribute CCTV 9 in the US.⁷⁹

An agreement for exchange of programs (to air shows that are produced outside China) was made between US CNBC Asia Pacific and the Shanghai Media Group in April 2001.⁸⁰ However, as Huang (2007) writes, it was not until a few years later, in 2004, that such arrangements became officially recognized by the Government in a document stating: *“domestic private investor’s right to invest in and partly own a media company, and indirectly recognize foreign investors’ the same right”*.⁸¹ There are several reasons the Government decided to finally open up the media industry, Huang (2007) writes: *“The first consideration was to attract private and foreign investment to ease the media industry’s*

⁷⁷ Huang, C., 2007, p: 415

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p: 419

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p: 420

capital shortage.”⁸² In order to attract serious and stable investment, an official policy had to be documented. Pressure came both from the media industry as well as keen investors both from the mainland and abroad. The media industry was a potential gold mine, especially in terms of the consumer media market. “*Second, Beijing’s decision to partly open the media sector to foreign investors reflected its strategic consideration to establish its own national and global media networks by cooperating with, and learning from, leading global media corporations.*”⁸³ This is made apparent by the agreements established before the official entering of WTO in 2001.

However, today there are signs that Chinese media is facing a more conservative policy environment compared to just a few years ago, when liberal media policies were implemented prior to the Beijing Olympics. Premier Wen Jiabao commented to the British media during a trip to Europe in June 2011: “*Tomorrow’s China will be a democratic country...*” However the same week the Danish newspaper *Information* printed information from Wikileaks documenting that the CCP by no means allows *aggressive* criticism towards the Party and the leaders, nor the promotion of other political systems and press freedom. In addition, the article claimed that the documents provided by Wikileaks state that “*politically sensitive*” information should be “*blocked*”, “*destroyed*” or “*removed*”. The documents, that *Information* claims is 100 percent genuine, were approved by the Central Committee, of which Premier Wen is a member.⁸⁴ On the one hand, there are claims that China is encouraging a freer press, on the other, evidence to suggest the opposite. In 2010 Murdoch decided to disinvest from China, partly because of the restrictions on the media business that limited profit-making. News Corp tried to find ways to crack the Chinese market, but discovered there were too many restrictions on both foreign and local media companies, and therefore decided to invest in India.⁸⁵ A Reuters-article states that News Corp along with other media companies had high expectations when entering the Chinese market in the late 1990s and early 2000, but the authorities in China tightened their grip on the media in 2005.⁸⁶ These signs indicate that the media in China may undergo changes towards a more strict and conservative policy. This will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

⁸² Huang, C., 2007, p: 421

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p: 421

⁸⁴ Aftenposten, 30.06.2011

⁸⁵ www.reuters.com/article/2010/08/09/us-newscorp-china-idUSTRE67810L20100809?pageNumber=1

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

3.3. English-language media in China

The first English language newspaper to appear in China was the translation of the *Peking Gazette* (see section 3.1) in the *North China Herald* in Shanghai during the 1800s and early 1900s.⁸⁷ Some claim that the English-language media has a special and more relaxed position in China's media system. With the opening-up policy implemented by Deng came the increase in number of print and broadcast media in English. Due to the language barrier, Guo and Huang (2002) claim that English media is more distanced from the power centre. However they do respect the regulations and are in compliance with the dominant mass ideology that all the media follow, so in a way they act as an English-language *mouthpiece of the Party*. Nevertheless the style of the journalism is more influenced by the western style of reporting due to the English language. Guo and Huang (2002) claim that the “*journalists across different English news media are more inclined toward providing factual, balanced, and objective accounts of daily events than those in the Chinese-language party press.*”⁸⁸ It could be claimed that the English-language press tries to a higher degree than the Chinese-language press to push the ideological limits.

China Daily, the biggest English-language newspaper in China was launched on June 1st, 1981. This was the country's only national English daily news paper until almost 20 years later, when *Shanghai Daily* began publishing. After this, more and more English-language magazines and newspapers have emerged all over China. There are only three national English news papers in China; *China Daily*, *The Economic Observer* and *Global Times*. Regionally, the most important are *Shanghai Daily*, *Beijing Today* and *ShenZhen Daily*.⁸⁹ With the increasing globalization and internationalization in China, the demand for English newspapers is likely to increase over the next few years.

3.4. Media's role after a successful revolution

It is important to understand that the media's role in a classic Communist society is in theory different from that in most western countries. After a successful revolution, the media's role is, according to Marxist theory, to help the government. The media is not supposed to be critical of the government itself. According to classic Communism, as

⁸⁷ <http://jimsheng.hubpages.com/hub/The-Oldest-Newspaper-In-The-World>

⁸⁸ Guo, Z. and Yu, H., 2002

⁸⁹ Information obtained through interviews

expressed in the Communist Manifesto⁹⁰ – after a revolution the society that emerges should be stripped of political and state organs:

*“When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the condition for the existence of class antagonisms and of abolished its own supremacy as a class.”*⁹¹

Free press and freedom of speech are seen as *bourgeois freedoms*.⁹² So when the communist revolution is successful, a media system as we know it in the West is not logical. The media, the party and the government become one. They are all there to serve the people. They all serve “*in the interest of the immense majority*”.⁹³ The press should serve the people, not any particular group or power interests within society. Although when writing the *Communist Manifesto*, it was impossible for the authors to know how it would be used in the future.

One can say that the Soviet Union is an example of how this ideology failed. But China differs from the Soviet Union, not least, due to Confucianism, which contributes to strong national identity, patriotism and pragmatism, illustrated in China’s acceptance of the market economy’s needs. The Chinese are more adaptable and willing to adjust their political path along with that of economic development. On those grounds one can wonder whether or not the outcome for China will differ from that of the Soviet Union’s.

3.5. Summing up historical background and Chinese media setting

The Chinese media industry is defined by several factors: ownership structures, the media’s role in society, its relation to the political context, government control and censorship, market liberalization and media commercialization.⁹⁴ The information revolution with nearly instant spread of news thanks to satellite communications, the

⁹⁰ Marx, K., and Engels, F., 1848 in English translation 1888

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Marx, K., 1922

⁹³ Marx, K., and Engels, F., 1848 in English translation 1888

⁹⁴ Winfield, H., B., and Peng, W., 2006

internet, and the widespread use of mobile phones brought new challenges to the CCP's control over the media.

In the former Soviet Union the abolishment of the Party's control over media in 1988-1989 was one of the factors that led to the demise of the system, and it seems as if the CCP is afraid the same might happen in China. This outcome can be questioned, since there are many differences between the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s and China today. The Chinese Government has had to become more adaptable, but only to the extent where it still owns and controls the majority of Chinese media. In 2004 a new law stated that foreign and private media firms had to form joint ventures with Chinese state-owned media companies. In this venture the foreign or private part was only allowed to own 49 per cent of the business.⁹⁵ Today the Chinese media plays several roles, from carrying out the Party's policies, to reporting on world news and entertaining the public. At the same time it tries to serve as checks for the Government, and a few are trying to set the agenda for future reforms and changes in the Chinese society.

3.6. Research question revisited

The media in China has gone through various changes following 1949 and 1978. From seemingly starting out as a means of communication for the Government, and supporting its every move, to a more lenient stance, where they try to question and enlighten the public within the boundaries of regulations set upon them. In the early 2000s it appeared that the Government was loosening its grip in order to attract capital, technology and know-how from international media organizations. These more relaxed policies seem to have led nowhere, since today one can witness stricter media policies than existed 10 years ago. Even though there are strong market forces behind the media, one can claim that more than ever the Chinese leaders have appointed themselves as information experts⁹⁶. They do not allow the media to report in the public's interest, but mainly in the Government's. The media is a victim of a propaganda apparatus⁹⁷, where the journalists cannot individually decide which news is important and which is not. Two recent events will now be analyzed to see if this assumption is valid.

⁹⁵ Huang, C., 2007

⁹⁶ Lippman, W., 1922

⁹⁷ Herman, S., E., and Chomsky, N., 1988

4. RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

To get a comprehensive look at how the media currently operates in China, both in relation to the Government's policies, the market and the public, two media events will be examined. Additionally, ten media professionals have been interviewed on their opinions on key media dimensions. The two events (the 2010 World Expo and the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize) will be analyzed first, followed by the empirical interview data. Both the cases and collected information will be used in Chapter 5, as part of the analysis and discussion.

4.1. Cases

The two events presented in this thesis have been chosen based on their international and national notoriety and because they portray opposing impressions of the Government - one positive (the 2010 World Expo) and one negative (2010 Nobel Peace Prize). The objective is to see how these two media events have or have not been used to portray the CCP policies. The two cases were treated quite differently by the media. The former being a prestige project for China, following the success with the Olympics in Beijing in 2008, the latter an event that questions China's political system. The two cases will be examined through the coverage and tone of reporting in two selected Chinese media, one national (*Xinhua*) and one regional (*Shanghai Daily*).

4.1.1. Case 1 – 2010 World Expo Shanghai China

With 246 participating countries and international organizations, and more than 73 million visitors during the 184 day period, the Shanghai World Expo was the biggest World Exposition ever to be held. The Expo site covered 5.28 km² in the centre of Shanghai, and the city's situation improved a lot in the run up to the event. The theme of the Expo "*Better City, Better Life*", explored the relationship between the city and human life from three different perspectives: people, the city and the global environment.⁹⁸ The event was important for the Government and China proved, yet again, to the rest of the world, what China is capable of (as did the 2008 Olympics). The event attracted almost all of the world's countries, large international companies and organizations and many of the most powerful leaders and business-people in the world. More than 22.900 events were held

⁹⁸ EXPO Bureau Shanghai

during the six month period.⁹⁹ This Government-run *prestige project* also made an impact on the media in China and how they reported the event. Below are a few news extracts, which constitute representative examples, drawn from an analysis of the Chinese media coverage of the 2010 World Expo.

Shanghai Daily had an Expo supplement each day during the Expo period from May 1st to October 31st 2010, and a web edition featuring several articles every day. Both covered all matters related to the event.¹⁰⁰

1) *Wen Jiabao said the Expo 2010 Shanghai China had been a splendid event and added a glorious chapter to the Expo history. Calling the event "eye-opener" and "unforgettable", the Premier expressed heartfelt gratitude on behalf of the Chinese government and pay high tribute to all people who had participated in, supported and contributed to the first Expo held by a developing country.*¹⁰¹

2) *Some public facilities at the Expo site will be moved to other prominent places in Shanghai after the six-month event ends in October, including the drinking water fountains, mist sprayers and mobile toilets that have won praise from visitors, a senior Expo official said yesterday.*¹⁰²

3) *New energy has contributed about 50 percent of total energy combustion at the Expo since it opened on May 1, says Hong Hao, deputy secretary general of Shanghai municipal government and director general of the Bureau of Shanghai World Expo Coordination.*¹⁰³

4) *The patience of Chinese visitors has impressed me the most since the opening of Expo, as they have to wait for more than five hours for our pavilion, said Abdulrahman al-Shaikh, commissioner general of the Saudi Arabia Pavilion.*¹⁰⁴

5) *The World Expo boosted tourism in the city with more than 4.2 million tourists arriving in Shanghai over the May Day holiday period (April 30 to May 4), nearly 25 percent more than the same period last year, local tourism authorities said yesterday.*¹⁰⁵

6) *The World Expo is a grand event to showcase the best achievements of human civilization. It is also a great occasion for people from around the world to share joy and friendship, said the president (Hu Jintao). On this Expo, China will present to the world a country with 5,000-year history, which is enjoying fast development and changes through reform and opening-up, he said.*¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ <http://en.expo2010.cn>

¹⁰⁰ <http://expo.shanghaidaily.com>

¹⁰¹ http://expo.shanghaidaily.com/news_detail.asp?id=453262, 31.10. 2010

¹⁰² http://expo.shanghaidaily.com/news_detail.asp?id=446655, 18.08. 2010

¹⁰³ http://expo.shanghaidaily.com/news_detail.asp?id=441992, 05.07. 2010

¹⁰⁴ http://expo.shanghaidaily.com/news_detail.asp?id=445177, 03.08. 2010

¹⁰⁵ http://expo.shanghaidaily.com/news_detail.asp?id=436033, 05.05. 2010

¹⁰⁶ http://expo.shanghaidaily.com/news_detail.asp?id=435762, 30.04. 2010

7) Closing ceremony: *President Hu Jintao said he was confident the world would "witness a successful, splendid and unforgettable World Expo." "As the first registered World Expo hosted by a developing country, the Shanghai Expo will be an opportunity for China and also for the world," Hu said. "This show couldn't be done anywhere but in China," said David Atkins, the executive producer of the outdoor performance.*¹⁰⁷

The *Shanghai Daily* Expo edition had the role of an information site/source before, during and after the Expo. The site had a multitude of reports for events of all kinds (political, cultural and business) that took place within the Expo site. Examining the selected extracts one can observe that: *Example 1)* stresses the success of China as the first developing country to hold an Expo and that China is adding splendor to the history of Expo. That today's China (read: led by the CCP) is able to pull off the world's biggest Expo ever. *Examples 2)* and *3)* illustrate how the Expo was environmentally friendly by reusing several facilities from Expo after the six month event, and the fact that half the energy used is green energy. China is developing into an environmentally-friendly country. *Examples 1)* and *4)* give credit to the Chinese people: *1)* how the Chinese people have contributed to the Expo and *4)* how the Chinese people/visitors impress the foreign participants. *Example 5)* very importantly stress the success Expo had for the city of Shanghai, in this case an increase in tourism. *Example 6)* gives credit to China, the Chinese political system and the successful development of the country. It also emphasizes China's long and grand history, and that China too has know-how to show the world. *Example 7)* confirms the success after the six months by President Hu Jintao.

The extracts of examples of the political reporting of the event and the reports done by *Shanghai Daily* are clearly of a positive nature. The rhetoric used are exceedingly positive, using phrasing such as: "*splendid event*"; "*glorious chapter to the Expo history*"; "*unforgettable*"; "*boosted tourism*"; "*won praise from visitors*"; "*patience of Chinese visitors*"; "*grand event*". In short one can say that the Expo was portrayed as an example of China's success and of its thriving development (attributed to the political system), success of the Chinese people and, envy from other countries. One can question if any of the articles are critical of China and Expo. They seem to be merely descriptions of what has happened, and read almost as an advertisement of China's (and Shanghai's) success.

¹⁰⁷ http://expo.shanghaidaily.com/news_detail.asp?id=435822, 01.05. 2010

Xinhua News Agency actively covered news from the Expo period, mostly related to official and political events.

1) *Some 20 world leaders were present at the opening ceremony, including Chinese President Hu Jintao, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and South Korean President Lee Myung Bak. Addressing the ceremony, the International Exhibitions Bureau (BIE) President Jean-Pierre Lafon said "Better City, Better Life", the chosen theme of the exhibition, must drive people to improve the quality of life for the citizens of both developing and developed countries as the majority of the world's population now lives in cities.*¹⁰⁸

2) *Overseas Chinese hailed the opening ceremony of the 2010 Shanghai World Expo Friday, saying it was a "perfect example of integration of Chinese characteristics and world diversity." "As an overseas Chinese, I feel so proud to see such a great event being hosted by China, and I feel the same excitement as was in Beijing Olympic games," said He Xiaohui, a Chinese community leader in Washington. "The spectacular ceremony made me feel very proud to be a Chinese," he said.*¹⁰⁹

3) *The Paris-based Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) Thursday praised the organizers of the popular 2010 World Expo in Shanghai. BIE Secretary-General Vicente Loscertales also praised the organization of the Shanghai Expo, saying that everything was going smoothly and the number of visitors was very likely to meet set targets.*¹¹⁰

4) *Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping urged Shanghai, China's economic and commercial hub, to push forward its reform and opening-up in an inspection tour to the metropolis. Reform and opening-up is the key to restructuring the nation's development pattern, Xi said. Xi also met with volunteers working at the Shanghai Expo venues during the tour. The Expo is a good chance for Shanghai to improve its management, Xi said, adding that the city should learn the good practices of other cities.*¹¹¹

Xinhua reported all official news, including reports on every meeting President Hu Jintao attended, as well as all political visitors. The political reports were all of a positive nature, and stated the success of the Expo. There were more reports in May than in the last few months of Expo. *Xinhua's* reports on political matters stressed China's role in the world, by highlighting such matters as the promotion of good relations with Taiwan and Japan, or the importance of the Chinese provinces and of minorities. Looking at the examples one can find: *Example 1*) leaves no question to China's global importance and its role (through the Expo) to develop the world into a better place, thus the theme: "*Better City, Better Life*". *Example 2*) demonstrates the proud sensation of the overseas Chinese and how they are proud of being a part of China. This gives credit to boosting nationalism in China. *Example 3*) praised by foreign leaders. Shows that China and Shanghai are delivering world class events and they are exceeding expectations. *Example 4*) stresses the importance for continued growth and development of Shanghai into China's economic

¹⁰⁸ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-05/01/c_13274431.htm, 01.05. 2010

¹⁰⁹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-05/01/c_13274446.htm, 01.05. 2010

¹¹⁰ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-07/02/c_13380384.htm, 02.07. 2010

¹¹¹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-09/27/c_13532384.htm, 27.09. 2010

hub, Expo representing a launching platform for that purpose. *Xinhua*'s reporting describes the event in a positive manner. Some examples of phrases and wording that show the positive tone: “holds talk”; “stressing cooperation”; “advance ties”¹¹²; “hailed the opening ceremony”; “perfect example”; “praised the organizers”. In short, one can claim that *Xinhua*'s reporting is stressing China as a major player on the global arena, capable of hosting the biggest and best Expo ever.

4.1.1.1. Responding to research question and summing up

From the chosen reports one can see that the Expo event was used as a positive media case, both to boost nationalism, but also to include the overseas Chinese in China's successful development. The positive reports stress the alleged success of the political system and of the current leadership, making the political nature and influence of CCP policies on reporting evident. In China the Expo was portrayed solely as a positive occasion, with the press using the Party line and focusing on the positive effects of the event. One can see articles about strengthening political ties, the development of new energy sources, cooperation between multinational companies among other success stories. It seems that when reporting on the Expo, the media was serving the Government, thus the style of reporting could be said to fit the “*Soviet Communist Theory*”¹¹³. Since the media was already given instructions on what they should report they were refused the responsibility of objective reporting, thus the “*Propaganda Theory*”¹¹⁴ could also be relevant.

However, one could claim that the Government used the media to promote the Expo's success to the public, and therefore promote the people's own success. As such, in this case it is important to bear in mind that this was not only a prestige project for the Government, but for the Chinese people as well, in particular those from Shanghai. The media in that case also responded to the public's wishes. Chinese industries, organizations and businesses were involved in Expo in terms of financial support and for them it would only be beneficial if the accounts from the event were positive. Maybe one could say that the reporting of the Expo covered the needs of the three key stakeholders, the Government, the market and the public.

¹¹² In articles not used here

¹¹³ Schramm, W., 1964

¹¹⁴ Herman, E., S. and Chomsky, N., 1988

Positive reporting of an international prestige project is not just a Chinese characteristic. It is common that the media of a host country (Expo, Olympics, World Cup) mostly reports positively on the event itself, though in some cases more critical than the Chinese press treated the Expo. In this particular case the foreign media also contained mostly stories on the overall success of the event. It would have been interesting to further investigate if the foreign media had critical observations of the event. However, this is beyond the purpose of this paper.

The next section contains the analysis of the second selected media event, the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize.

4.1.2. Case 2 – 2010 Nobel Peace Prize

Contrary to the World Expo, the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize was perceived as a negative occurrence by the Chinese Government. The award was granted to Liu Xiaobo, who has been sentenced to 11 years in prison for taking part in several activities that pose a threat to the Chinese Government.¹¹⁵ International media reported that after the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize was announced, the Chinese state media was accusing the Nobel Committee in Norway of using the prize as a political tool. *Xinhua* wrote: “*Jagland and his fellows have repeatedly used the Nobel Prize as a political tool. Last year, they deployed it to serve the interest of Europe, and this year they did it again to serve the interest of certain forces in the West who still enshrine the Cold War ideology.*” The same article claims that the prize is another attempt to sabotage “*the rise of the country*”.¹¹⁶ In Norway the 2010 Nobel Peace prize received both positive and negative reactions. Most outspoken were probably the Norwegian business community claiming that giving the prize to Liu only harmed the relationship between Norway and China, a position supported by the political left in Norway.¹¹⁷

The matter of Liu winning the Peace Prize has once again pushed the issue of human rights in China to the forefront of international debates. The Chinese Government has been clear on its stance on the matter. As *The Economist* reported a month after the decision,

¹¹⁵ Liu has been a political activist since the late 1980s, and was an important figure in the 1989 incident. He was jailed in 2008 after signing a charter (Charter 08) before the 2008 Olympics, demanding political reforms.

¹¹⁶ <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/China-media-calls-Nobel-Peace-Prize-political-tool/articleshow/6833627.cms>

¹¹⁷ Aftenposten, 10/2010 – 12/2010

quoting the statement of a Deputy Foreign Minister: "... other countries faced a stark choice: either take part in "this political game" over Mr. Liu or develop friendly relations with China. Make wrong choice, he threatened, and "they will have to bear the consequences".¹¹⁸ The Chinese Government said it is firmly against attempts by any country or individual to use the Nobel Peace Prize to interfere in China's internal affairs and infringe on its judicial sovereignty.¹¹⁹

Only one of the two chosen media contained mentions of this event, and below are examples from *Xinhua News Agency*.

1) Awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to China's Liu Xiaobo desecrated the prize and could harm China-Norway ties, said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu on Friday. The Nobel Peace Prize should be awarded to people who contribute to national harmony, country-to-country friendship, advancing disarmament, and convening and propagandizing peace conferences, Ma said. Ma said Liu was a criminal sentenced by the Chinese judicial authorities for violating Chinese law. "What he has done is contrary to the purpose of the Nobel Peace Prize," he said.¹²⁰

2) It is a big mistake to grant this year's Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo as the Chinese receiver made no contribution to peace or conflict reduction, a Norwegian professor said Tuesday. "I therefore cannot see that the peace prize winner fulfills the most important criteria in Nobel's testament. Therefore it is a mistake," added the professor of social psychology and China expert. The Chinese Foreign Ministry on Tuesday blasted the awarding as showing "no respect for China's judicial system," saying that Beijing questions the "true intention" behind the selection.¹²¹

3) The awarding demonstrates that the once prestigious prize has degenerated into a political tool of some Western powers. According to Nobel's wishes, the Peace Prize should be awarded to person(s) who "shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses." However, the committee awarded it in 1989 to the Dalai Lama, who strove to separate China and disrupt ethnic harmony. This year, the committee honored a person who has violated Chinese law. The decision also shows that a few Westerners are unable to come to terms with China's growth, and therefore try to tarnish the image of China by all means.¹²²

4) "What is the true intention of those foreign political figures and governments who support the granting of the Nobel Peace Prize to Mr. Liu Xiaobo? Is it because they resent China's development path and hate China's political system?" Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu questioned. "China's affairs should be left to Chinese people themselves," Ma said, adding that the few biased individuals with the Norwegian Nobel Committee had no right to judge China, and western governments had no right to interfere in China's internal affairs.¹²³

¹¹⁸ The Economist, November 2010

¹¹⁹ Xinhuanet.com

¹²⁰ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-10/08/c_13547668.htm, 08.10. 2010

¹²¹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-10/13/c_13555559.htm, 13.10. 2010

¹²² http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2010-10/14/c_13557848.htm, 14.10. 2010

¹²³ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-10/14/c_13557919.htm, 14.10. 2010

5) *It is said that the Norwegian Nobel Committee has long believed that there is a close link between human rights and peace. If that is true, in what ways have Liu's actions contributed to human rights progress for China's 1.3 billion people? The Chinese government has always paid great attention to poverty alleviation, which is closely related to the rights of subsistence and development. From 1978 to 2008, the population living under the poverty line dropped from 250 million to about 40 million. The decision to award a convicted criminal only disgraces the Nobel Peace Prize itself and destroys its credibility in China.*¹²⁴

6) *China said Thursday its relations with Norway had been affected by the Oslo-based Nobel Committee's decision to grant this year's Nobel Peace Prize to convicted Chinese criminal Liu Xiaobo. "I think it is difficult to maintain China-Norway relations as well as they were in the past, because the Nobel Committee conferred the Nobel Peace Prize on a convicted Chinese criminal, and the Norwegian government publicly expressed its support for such a decision," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu. "The issue of Liu Xiaobo is not a matter of free speech and human rights. It is a matter of respecting other countries' judicial rights and how to view China's development path and social system," she added.*¹²⁵

Following the announcement of the prize being awarded to Liu, the Chinese media only reported the Chinese Government's reaction and those supporting its stance. The extracts are of similar tone and highly political: *Example 1)* states on the day of the announcement that the Chinese Government opposes the award to dissident Liu Xiaobo, and what Liu has contributed with is in direct conflict with the purpose of the Nobel Peace Prize, he is in fact sentenced for violating Chinese law. The second example affirms how people outside China also see the award going to Liu as a big mistake, due to the fact the winner does not fulfill the criteria in Nobel's testament and crosses the line in mutual respect for a country's sovereignty. *Example 3)* reminds how the Nobel Committee also went against the Chinese Government in 1989, by giving the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama, who *Xinhua* states: *tried to separate China and disrupt ethnic harmony*. *Example 4)* goes further and claims that those supporting the granting of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu actually offend China's development path, and political system. *Example 5)* states the success of the political system in China, and lists several success factors, and asks what Liu has done to improve life for the Chinese people. *Example 6)* confirms that the relationship between Norway and China has being negatively affected, because the Norwegian Government publicly supported the decision of the Nobel Committee. Norway crossed the line by showing disrespect for China's judicial and social system and development.

¹²⁴ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2010-10/17/c_13561353.htm, 17.10. 2010

¹²⁵ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-12/02/c_13632608.htm, 02.12. 2010

4.1.2.1 Responding to research questions and summing up

From the reporting of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize it is clear that the Chinese Government decided what was reported and how it was reported. It was only *Xinhua* and other Party-driven official media that covered the event and they followed the same political line. In a way one can say that the media limited its voice to describing the success of the Party in improving people's livelihoods, seemingly illustrating the status quo. However, the articles examined in this thesis are considered subjective and lacking an objective voice. The Chinese Government has declared itself as the only official channel for reporting about the Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to Liu.

This case illustrates the media's role in promoting Party policies, and how only selected factions of opinions are being aired through the official media channels. In Communist tradition, the Government and/or the Party define what is in the public's interest. The media speak in this case for the Government and ensure its interest. In terms of the market, its interest lies in a stable society, not in political unrest and instability. Since the case of the Nobel Peace Prize is such a sensitive matter, the Chinese Government decided that only one official line of reporting should be followed. Few media reported the case and those that did, followed the Government's regulations and line accordingly. It is likely that many Chinese do not even know what the Nobel Peace Prize is, who Liu Xiaobo is, or that the Prize was awarded to a Chinese. The public is therefore deprived of the choice of obtaining information on the issue. Therefore it can be seen from this case that the media is working for the Government and the market, excluding the public.

4.1.3. Discrepancies between the two media events

When looking at the coverage of the two media events, one finds quite similar reporting styles. However, their purpose was quite opposite. The positive Expo related news was meant to strengthen Chinese nationalism and enhance awareness of China's image and role on the global arena. Whereas the reporting of the Nobel Prize was done in a manner to leave no doubt that China is correct and the Nobel Committee is wrong. Liu being awarded the 2010 Peace Prize was like a punch in the face for the Chinese Government as it had the potential to harm China's image both nationally and internationally. Due to the fact that the Government had such strict control over the reporting of the case, a national scandal was prevented. One could also assume that the Chinese Government used the Nobel Prize as a tool to claim the "West is attacking China" and "victimizing it in a similar fashion as

during the Opium Wars”. It is not the first time China has reacted strongly to the Nobel Prize. Many Chinese, both writers and economists have been upset in the past that their work went unrecognized by the Nobel Committee. In the case of Gao Xingjian receiving the Nobel Prize for literature in 2000, it only angered the Chinese as Gao was at the time living in Paris and was considered a *dissident* author.¹²⁶ They saw it as an insult to China, just as with the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu was seen as an insult to Chinese society. This will be further elaborated on in Chapter 5.

¹²⁶ Gries, H.,P., 2004

4.2. Interviews

In this section data from interviews conducted with key individuals working in various circles of the Chinese media industry will be presented. The purpose of this is to see how the professional actors see the system and their role in Chinese society. The interviews have been conducted between February 2011 and June 2011 in Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen. The first table illustrates how and if the journalists experience that their daily work is influenced by CCP policies. The table exemplifies how journalists in China work in a one-party-state in the modern information age.

TABLE 3, To what degree does CCP bear influence on your daily work?

Media	CCP Influence
Shanghai Daily, Reporter local news	<i>Working as a journalist in China there are certain rules that you just obey, no questions asked. Both the journalists and the public know this.</i>
Shanghai Media Group, International Relations	<i>Media and Government are one: you work for media, you take orders from the Government.</i>
21 st China Business Herald, Financial reporter	<i>It is not only controlled by the CCP, but also by the Government on local level. We receive orders on what we can and cannot write, that is how it is.</i>
International Channel Shanghai, Host and reporter	<i>All is under Government supervision. We get a license which we have to renew every year, every 3-5 year we have to take a test to check our knowledge and stances in various topics.</i>
Shanghai Media Group, Producer and business development manager	<i>SMG is directly under CCP. The news department is more influenced than the feature department.</i>
China Daily, Reporter (international affairs)	<i>CCP highly influences my daily work. There are several topics we are obliged to report on, such as national sessions and government topics, and there are restrictions what we cannot report on. Since we are directly under CCP, we cannot report news harming China's image and the Central Government, but we try to report on sensitive issues as best as possible.</i>
Phoenix TV, Director of documentaries (finance, environment)	<i>Even though we are listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, we have to follow the regulations set by CCP. Maybe we can talk a little freer, but we cannot cross the line.</i>
Xinhua News Agency, Financial reporter	<i>Xinhua has two functions, report to the public the policies of the Government and report to the Party about the public. We basically serve the Party and ensure their interests.</i>
CCTV, Economic and Financial reporter	<i>The official line is made by the Central Government, you do not criticize it. Stability come first, we don't need problems, that's the basic line. Eventually reporters get disciplined and follow the regulations.</i>
QQ/ Tencent, Senior Business Manager	<i>Daily influence. Even though we are listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, we have to obey the rules and regulation by the Government. If something we do gets too sensitive, we can risk being closed down.</i>

As one can read from the answers, they all agree that their daily work is directly influenced by the CCP – seen as something natural in a communist society. Almost all the interview subjects mention rules, regulations or instructions as part of the CCP influence. It is

therefore interesting to see how the instructions are being passed down from the Government to the employees of different media.

TABLE 4, Instructions given by the Government

Media	Instructions
Shanghai Daily, Reporter local news	<i>The Security Bureau sends out documents explaining the bottom line of how to report on certain issues and those are followed by all. There are always several editors that read the pieces before they go to print, if something is posted online that is considered too sensitive, the Government asks the media to remove it.</i>
Shanghai Media Group, International Relations	<i>Media and Government is the same thing, you can not separate them, this notion is not in the Chinese mind. It is from top to bottom, and it is not our place to questions.</i>
21 st China Business Herald, Financial reporter	<i>Each day at 2 pm the editor receives a document from the Propaganda Department, telling how to report on certain current issues, what can be said, which words can be used, along with official photographs.</i>
International Channel Shanghai, Host and reporter	<i>In meetings before we go on air we are told which topics are sensitive and which terms we cannot use. We can only critique the Party in a mild way, in things that are commonly known and the Party is ok with an open discussion. No harsh criticism is allowed.</i>
Shanghai Media Group, Producer and business development manager	<i>We get verbal messages, sms and emails stating the regulations and updated policies.</i>
China Daily, Reporter (international affairs)	<i>When something sensitive happens, Xinhua sends out a press release to all media. This is the line that has to be followed. If an accident happens, editors receive a document with set rules, a list of what to say and not. Examples of sensitive issues are Liu Xiaobo, 4th of June, Google and media censorship.</i>
Phoenix TV, Director of documentaries (finance, environment)	<i>The bosses let us know what direction we are going, but we always try to go a little further.</i>
Xinhua News Agency, Financial reporter	<i>Since we are directly under the CCP we receive tasks from our editors. We know what we should report, and what we shouldn't. All news we do are censored, but financial reporting is freer than political reporting. We can report almost anything, but some reports only reach the Government.</i>
CCTV, Economic and Financial reporter	<i>The managers receive guidelines from above and they pass it on to us in meetings. We know what we can and cannot say and do, we have to follow the official line. Scripts are always read by the manager, finally approved by the director of the department, the show is also watched before it is aired.</i>
QQ/ Tencent, Senior Business Manager	N/A

The instructions passed down by the Government to the interviewed journalists are accepted as an expected part of their work. One of the interview subjects explained that journalists and the general public do not have the notion of the media and the Government as separate entities. It is commonly accepted that there should be no criticism towards the Central Government. Even though this is not part of the instructions given by the Government this thought is strongly entrenched in the mind of the media employees. Next,

the journalists were asked about possible punishments if instructions are not followed or commonly set lines are overstepped.

TABLE 5, Punishment if instructions are not followed

Media	Answers regarding punishment
Shanghai Daily, Reporter local news	<i>N/A</i>
Shanghai Media Group, International Relations	<i>A mistake can influence your career. One example: A CCTV reporter mentioned Taiwan as a country during the Japan earthquake, and he was not to be seen on TV the day after... why?</i>
21 st China Business Herald, Financial reporter	<i>If we do not follow the regulations, we can be fined or taken into questioning by police. Worst case if a newspaper does not oblige to the rules, it will be closed down. If I come across a sensitive matter, I try to rewrite to avoid the sensitive words, it is up to the editor if they publish.</i>
International Channel Shanghai, Host and reporter	<i>N/A</i>
Shanghai Media Group, Producer and business development manager	<i>If you say or do the wrong thing, you will have to write a letter of apology or you can possibly be downgraded.</i>
China Daily, Reporter (international affairs)	<i>There is something called “coffee time” for reporters and photographers when there is an accident or a sensitive event of some sort (demonstrations, fires), journalists and photographers are taken away for a certain amount of time by the police. When there is nothing left to report, they are free to go. If you cross the line you have to write an apology letter to the Government and could be fined.</i>
Phoenix TV, Director of documentaries (finance, environment)	<i>If you work in the media, there is always someone watching you, you have to be careful, or they can lock you up. I can be dismissed or jailed, and even my family could be jailed or get in to trouble. We know that this has happened in the past.</i>
Xinhua News Agency, Financial reporter	<i>We can be fined or dismissed.</i>
CCTV, Economic and Financial reporter	<i>It is not worth the risk crossing the line.</i>
QQ/ Tencent, Senior Business Manager	<i>The company can be punished.</i>

From the answers given above one can read that most of the people working in the media sector are aware that they are being watched. If they do a mistake in terms of overstepping their bounds, they can be punished, or as some claim, their family members can “*get into trouble*”. What seems to be common is the self-censorship that the media worker places upon him/herself. As one person said: “*It is not worth crossing the line*”. In the last table the interview subjects openly talk about their experiences and feelings towards the system of which they are a part, voluntarily or not.

TABLE 6, Thought on current media system

Media	Opinions and thoughts
Shanghai Daily, Reporter local news	<i>It is dangerous talking about these things in public, since we are talking in English it is a little safer. It is actually the same with media, the English language media is a little freer, but still they have to follow the same rules as Chinese language media. We always keep the rules and regulations in the back of our mind.</i>
Shanghai Media Group, International Relations	<i>Media and Government is the same thing, you can not separate them, this notion is not in the Chinese mind. It is from top to bottom, it is not our place to questions. Who would want to risk it? One person's opinion is not enough to change the system, and the risks of putting these opinions out there may be very harmful to yourself and your family. Government is number 1, and I do not think there will be many changes the next 10 years.</i>
21 st China Business Herald, Financial reporter	<i>China does not have a healthy environment for free press. I would like it to be free, but now is not the time, it is not good for China in a long time perspective. The Chinese people are used to the media as it is, it is not the time for change. Before it was only propaganda news, now there is one voice but many different channels. So in a way it is improving.</i>
International Channel Shanghai, Host and reporter	<i>N/A</i>
Shanghai Media Group, Producer and business development manager	<i>The control of the media is getting more relaxed, but it will not change as long as the CCP is in charge. For me the current situation is ok, it is the way it is, it is inevitable.</i>
China Daily, Reporter (international affairs)	<i>In China there is only one opinion, that is how it is. The English language newspapers try to follow more western style journalism, to show opposite opinion and create a debate.</i>
Phoenix TV, Director of documentaries (finance, environment)	<i>I think the system is necessary, but not necessarily correct. I do not think it will change as long as CCP is in power. Sometimes I find it difficult when I know there is a problem affecting ordinary people, and we cannot report it.</i>
Xinhua News Agency, Financial reporter	<i>I think the media will become more diversified in the next 10 years. The internet challenges the traditional media, the media has to cater the people's interest.</i>
CCTV, Economic and Financial reporter	<i>Personally I can't work anymore, the job is becoming more difficult. I have lost my ambition. Things are being controlled tighter than before, there is a conservative rise in Maoism, the Party and nationalism is booming. We've done good, but we can do better. Studying abroad, I was trained to find different opinions and voices for stories, but coming back to China to work, after trying a few times, you see that it is not much choice. But sometimes we try to be ethical and report the wrongdoings and sometimes we succeed, and then you make an impact.</i>
QQ/ Tencent, Senior Business Manager	<i>Media is too important for the Government. They have to be in strict control. It's not right, but there is no other way for China now. The population is too big and it can be dangerous. This is the special China way, it will change little by little.</i>

It is interesting to hear the honest opinions of individual members of Chinese media employees relating to the system and the role of the media in today's society. On the one hand, most of them see the need for the media in its current form. Some mention that the Chinese public is not ready for an open press, that the environment in Chinese society is not yet ripe for that. On the other hand some of them regard the situation they are in as *hopeless*. The reporter from CCTV has given up on his/hers journalistic ideals. One can find that those educated outside mainland China want a more open press, and that they sometime feel helpless in the situation they are in, mentioning that there are wrongdoings

conducted by the Government they cannot report on. Some of the interviewees find the media situation acceptable, not criticizing the system. Another says he/she thinks there have been positive changes in recent years with the increasing amount of channels which help to reflect the diversity. The internet is mentioned as a possible factor that will change and challenge the current media control, but most of the interviewees do not see a change in the media system until there is a change in the one-party political system in China.

4.3. Summing up

Chapter 4 presents and analyzes current empirical data. The focus of the analysis are two major media events (the 2010 World Expo and 2010 Nobel Peace Prize), and interviews/conversations with 10 Chinese media staff. Through examining the selected media cases one can claim that the media seems to follow the party doctrine. However, when investigating the gathered materials from the interviews one can find that except from the common agreement on CCP influence in the media and journalists' roles, there is also an acceptance of the way the media are operating in China today. An interesting point for discussion is how some of the journalists mention that the media and the Government represent one entity; there is no sense of separation of the two in the Chinese mindset. Even though there is a discontent towards the direct influence the CCP has, there is still a sense of inevitability of the system, and some of the interviewees even claimed that the Chinese population is not yet ready for a free press.

In general, the findings from the interview section show that most of the interview subjects are somewhat at ease with the media situation today, they do not see it as perfect, but they consider it sufficient for the time-being. The media cases selected for this analysis illustrate that the media, in cases of positive reporting, serves its purpose of reporting to and for the public, for the Government and the market. But when it comes to politically sensitive information, the public is excluded. It seems although, that the majority of the people are content with the media and the political system in China. If that is a correct assumption, does this not border on democratic ideals? One can question whether or not the media is actually functioning as they should in today's China. What does the future hold? This will be discussed in the next chapter.

5. ANALYSIS - EMPIRICAL DATA CONFRONTED WITH ASSUMPTIONS

In this chapter the findings from the previous sections will be confronted with the assumptions made in the Introduction, section 1.4. Attempts are made to identify possible implications for the Government, the market and the public in relation to the media's changing role in China. Media has the potential power to influence the mind and thoughts of their readers and viewers. There have been significant changes in communication technologies which have led to the multiplication of channels through which information is conveyed, especially with the emergence of the internet. Prior to this the media operated under a one-way communication line. The internet has brought with it both challenges and opportunities for the media situation in China and the rest of the world.

It has been illustrated earlier that most media theories are not applicable to China's situation today. As described, the economic transition in Chinese society has played a big part in changing the media's relation to key agencies in society. Western theories can be considered outdated, putting too much emphasis on political and social aspects, and leaving out the economic factor. The Chinese media system is defined by the political, social, economic and cultural environment, and one can ask if the economic reforms will change or relax the political agenda and media in China further?¹²⁷ Media transition is often a result of changes in society. Winfield and Peng (2006) give the examples of a few different occasions where media transition has occurred after major changes in society; *"social and political change, e.g. former Soviet Union; or by technology alterations, as in the US"*.¹²⁸ China differs from both: the media transition happened after and along with major economic changes. China is described as unique due to the fact that the political structures remained intact, communist policies continued, while the economy turned more and more toward a capitalist model. Winfield and Peng (2006) claim this is a brand new case in the studies of media transition and that China does not actually fit into any former media models.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Lee, C., C., 1994

¹²⁸ Winfield, H., P., and Peng, Z. 2006, p: 255

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

5. 1. The media used as a tool for the Government?

During Mao and the reign of a sinicized Marxism ideology, the media was basically used as a tool for class struggle. The media's role was to help indoctrinate people with the ideology and policies of the Party, and mobilize the masses.¹³⁰ During the Deng era and then under Jiang Zemin, the Government tried to find a suitable place and role for the media. Society was changing fast with market economy policies, new rules and regulations emerged for the financial sector, and the media had to change accordingly. During these decades it seemed as though the Government was trying out different strategies regarding the media and searching for solutions to fit the media into the newly emerging socio-economic context. This is something that is still occurring in China today.

5.1.1. A glance at Korea

State influence over the media can also be observed in non-communist countries in East Asia. South Korea has had a history of strong state control and censorship¹³¹, although today it is in a phase of freedom of the press. However, a law (The National Security Law) gives the Government the opportunity to limit the expression of pro-North Korean opinions or communist ideas. The South Korean Government and the powerful business community are criticized for imposing their view points and using their power to influence the press.¹³² There are further similarities between the media in China and South Korea. Both have been influenced by the American model at some point, and they have both experienced dictatorship and both have historically been and still are strongly influenced by Confucianism.¹³³ Today they may have different political systems, but both are enjoying a successful market economy and are strongly influenced by the cultural Confucian heritage where hierarchy and respect for superiors (government) is central. A query might be raised

¹³⁰ Winfield, H., P., and Peng, Z., 2006

¹³¹ Almost all South Korean governments have at times attempted to control the media. From Syngman Rhee's government when leftist newspapers were outlawed and several newspapers were closed down, and it was a period when many reporters and publishers were arrested. During the Park government, nearly 50 newspapers in Seoul were closed, and media was used to promote the official line. The Chun government established more thorough control of the news media in the 1980s, and censorship was widespread. The Ministry of Culture and Information sent "reporting guidelines" to newspaper editors with guidelines for reporting, much as in China today. In 1987 the Roh government stated "a free press, including allowing newspapers to base correspondents in provincial cities and withdrawing security officials from newspaper offices." The media expanded in South Korea. Most ownership of the media in Korea is separated from political power, and they financial support is mostly derived from advertising, except two newspapers and the state television network that are controlled by the Government. (<http://countrystudies.us/south-korea/73.htm>, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/2754621>) and Cumings, B., 1999

¹³² <http://countrystudies.us/south-korea/73.htm>

¹³³ <http://www.jstor.org/pss/2754621>

when making a comparative glance at the media in South Korea and China. Even though they are operating in totally different political systems, are their media's roles similar? They seem to generally be following the line advocated by the establishment (big businesses and government bureaucracy), and are careful not to touch upon politically sensitive topics or issues which could harm the government's image. There are a few critical leftist liberal newspapers in Korea that are more critical towards the Government and the big businesses, but they still operate within the boundaries of what is accepted by the Government. They are, similar to the conservative newspapers, in that they are also dependant on financial support that comes in the form of advertisement. This is a highly relevant point, and it presents a fruitful avenue for future research.

5.1.2. Confucian influence in China

Today the CCP uses an array of ideologies, including traditional philosophies such as Confucianism¹³⁴ since they are no longer able to claim legitimacy solely based on Mao's sinicized Marxism. In Confucianism people should follow their benevolent ruler(s), who, due to his/their "*heavenly mandate and presumed moral characters*"¹³⁵ are best fit to rule and take care over his/their people and create a harmonious society.¹³⁶ Today the CCP is presented as "*the only political force that could lead China to power and prosperity in a perceived treacherous if not hostile world.*"¹³⁷ The Hu-Wen leadership¹³⁸ uses pre-revolution cultural traditions from Confucianism to ensure stability and popular support. At the CCP's 16th National Congress in late 2002, Hu Jintao officially became the President of the PRC, and put forward his guidelines which are basically centered on the traditional Confucian concept of *he*, meaning peace or harmony.¹³⁹ The media represents an important tool for maintaining stability and political harmony in China. One learns from the interviews that even though the journalists are not comfortable with the way they and the public are being controlled, they to some degree agree that the Chinese public is not yet ripe for a free press.

¹³⁴ The Confucian tradition is about 2500 years old. Confucianism filtered traditional Chinese society, and is seen as establishment-oriented. The central concepts stressed the need to achieve harmony in society through moral conduct in all relationships. (Wang, J., 2002)

¹³⁵ Winfield, H., B., and Peng, Z., 2006, p: 266

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Qing, C., 2007, p: 434

¹³⁸ Hu-Wen leadership is the name used for President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao

¹³⁹ Qing, C., 2007

5.2. Weakened control over media?

One might say that in China the voice of the media is currently being shaped by the totalitarian political system and by market forces at the same time. The market economy in China is a reality, but the CCP and the Chinese Government are still considered to hold the absolute power.¹⁴⁰ The Chinese people's increasing usage of mobile phones and the internet has changed the traditional way of communication, with over 457 million (up 19.1 percent compared to 2009)¹⁴¹ internet users being registered today.¹⁴² This number is likely to increase each year. Even though people are free to discuss openly, even in universities and class rooms, there is a common notion that what is being discussed should be confined to the private sphere and not discussed publicly. As soon as an opinion which is not compatible with the policies of CCP is taken public, either via the internet or by other means, the Government will most likely shut the site down or put an end to the discussion by other means. The media has to follow the rules that are put on them by the CCP, if not they can suffer severe consequences.

As one can gather from the historical backdrop in Chapter 3, the Chinese media has played an important part in the CCP political agenda from the very beginning. Some claim that they have acted as a *mouth piece* for the Government more so than a *watch dog*, which is the role the western media tends to assume. However, even though the western media is freer in their reporting and most western countries have more relaxed media policies than China, the media is always used as a tool, either by the owners, the agenda setters, the government, or the advertisers. Since the commercialization of the Chinese media industry in the late 1970s, Huang (2001) argues that the media has indeed gone from having the sole purpose of serving the Party to serving ordinary Chinese news consumers.¹⁴³

Press freedom within the Communist state logic, is in principle a right according to paragraph 53 in the Chinese Constitution, but the Government runs seemingly strict censorship and control. The Propaganda Department keeps control over the media and

¹⁴⁰ Winfield, H., B., and Peng, Z., 2006

¹⁴¹ www.chinainternetwatch.com/whitepaper/china-internet-statistics/

¹⁴² Halskov, H., M., and Thøgersen, S., 2008

¹⁴³ Huang, C. J., 2001

what and how topics are being reported.¹⁴⁴ This will be elaborated on in section 5.4 – CCP’s control of the media.

The sphere with the most freedom of speech in China appears to be the blogosphere. Both journalists and non-journalists use blogs to direct criticism towards the Chinese Government without being caught by the censorship apparatus. The bloggers use methods like spelling Chinese characters phonetically or using different similar-sounding characters to avoid the censor’s monitors.¹⁴⁵ One example of a blogosphere news report the Government is/was unable to control is the train accident in East China in July 2011. The Government first allowed the media to openly report the accident, even questioning whether economic development should surpass the importance of individual lives. However, after a week of criticism the Government clamped down on the open policy reporting. There were similar situations both with the Sichuan earthquake in 2008 and the so-called milk scandal the same year. However, this year the Government could not control the blogosphere, where an open discussion continues regarding the accident and the shortcomings of how the Government is dealing with the tragedy.¹⁴⁶

5.3. China’s “rational truth-seeking elite”

There is little reason to leave out that the CCP plays an essential part in what the media reports on. The seeming lack of freedom of the press in China in terms of political reporting makes Lippman’s theory relevant. As mentioned earlier, he believes that the crowd needs to be led by a *rational truth-seeking elite*, who reports on news that the enlightened people define as important.¹⁴⁷ The enlightened elite in China it seemingly represented by Party leaders, high-ranking officials, Party-members and successful business people of high influence. It does not seem like journalists provide a representative coverage to all significant groups in the society, which should be the ideal goal for journalists in general from a western, liberal political logic. The journalists in China seem to lack the knowledge of the Hurst theory¹⁴⁸, about the right time for fact, interpretation and opinion. It may seem like the journalists only present the *facts* provided by the superior

¹⁴⁴ Halskov, H., M., and Thøgersen, S., 2008

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.cfr.org/china/media-censorship-china/p11515>

¹⁴⁶ Afternposten, 04.08. 2011

¹⁴⁷ Lippman W., 1922

¹⁴⁸ Hurst, J., 1991

organs. In a sense one can argue that journalists in China not really have to deal with the issue of individual decision-making whereas they are already informed about what can and cannot be reported on.¹⁴⁹ However, even though in many cases Chinese journalists do not have much opportunity to choose their sources and interview subjects, they still seem to be able to present the information with a personal twist.

5.4. CCP's control of the media

The Government in Beijing is trying to come up with rules and regulations appropriate for the new Chinese society. They need to balance the news flow while at the same time not find themselves in a position where the Government is being seriously questioned, which can result in discontent towards the CCP. It is believed that the current leadership (Hu-Wen) has had a more liberal approach to the press than former President Jiang Zemin, but in reality under the Hu-Wen administration there has been witnessed an increase in restrictive media regulations. One example is the 2008 Olympics where China promised a more relaxed policy towards the media; *“be open in every aspect to the rest of the country and the whole world”*.¹⁵⁰ Wen Jiabao signed a document in early 2007 stating that foreign journalists could report without permits and conduct interviews with whom ever they wanted, with the objects' consent. These guidelines lasted for about 20 months, until October 27, 2008.¹⁵¹

There are two primary censoring agencies in China: 1) the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) that grants licenses to publishers, screen-written publications, and can ban materials/shut down outlets; and 2) the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT) that has authority over radio, television, film, and internet broadcasts. They are both subordinated to the highest authority censorship organ which is the CCP's Propaganda Department, thus ensuring that all that is approved by the monitoring organs are in line with Party doctrine.¹⁵² There are several ways that the Government controls the media, ranging from dismissals and fines, to closing news outlets and in the worst case imprisonment.¹⁵³ There are national restrictions, but both provincial and local officials can

¹⁴⁹ Welle-Strand, K., 2003

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/11/AR2008031102086.html>

¹⁵¹ http://cfr.org/publication/11515/media_censorship_in_china.html

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

also release their own directives to the local media.¹⁵⁴ However, the most effective form of control might be self-censorship by the journalists, the editors, advertisers and private investors. From the interview data it is clear that the media receives direct orders from the Government as to what they can and cannot report, as well as how they can and cannot report on certain issues (in most cases politically sensitive news). The press receives documents explaining the line that should be taken and it has no choice but to follow these guidelines. The few that choose not to follow the rules can receive punishment. In theory people can discuss whatever they feel like, but there are still restrictions in the official sphere. Financial reporting is seen as more accepted by the CCP and enjoys greater freedom. The instructions that the media workers receive appear to be mostly accepted as a part of their work, even though there is an increasing amount of foreign-trained journalists working in China, who vent critical questions. The main line for the media is that there can be no criticism towards the Central Government. To some extent there is freer reporting in terms of criticizing provincial and local governments, but there is still a risk. And, since the line in this area is unclear, the journalists are cautious in their critical reporting when dealing with local authorities as well.

5.5. Implications for the Government

Even though political freedom (from a western perspective) is largely absent, changes in ownership and a more market oriented media is leading to “*the overall development in journalism and media professionalism in China*”.¹⁵⁵ The 2010 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Liu Xiabo has attracted international attention to media and censorship in China. One can argue that there are three significant factors to the media development in China. Roy (2004) states that the increasing “*de-ideologization*” as a result of Deng’s pragmatic economic policies has made the economic imperative the only “*remaining basis of the Communist Party’s power and legitimacy*”¹⁵⁶. Secondly he states the “*gradual functional shift on the part of the local party cadres and bureaucratic authorities from ideological supervision to entrepreneurial collaboration with private investors*”¹⁵⁷. And lastly there is the profit-making aspect of media that did not exist before.¹⁵⁸ These factors have played a

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.cfr.org/china/media-censorship-china/p11515>

¹⁵⁵ Huang, C., 2007, p: 424

¹⁵⁶ Roy, A., M., 2004, p: 554

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p: 554

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

central role in changing media's role in China. Adding to this are the challenges for the media to further develop and challenge the existing conventions set by the CCP. With the rapid economic and technological development in China, there has also become somewhat a more diverse coverage of events, and the growing demand from the people for information "*is testing the regime's control over the media*".¹⁵⁹

5.6. Chinese media and Chinese nationalism

A good sense of nationalism is beneficial to the Chinese Government, since it reflects the people's contentment with the authorities. On the one hand, there is latent nationalism, which is the internalized core of nationalism, embedded through the education system, state ideology, culture and social life, thus becoming a natural part of life. On the other hand, there is manifest nationalism - which is brought out by spectacular events. It can be anything ranging from a feeling that arises during crises, international conflicts, celebrations and sporting events. Events of this level are able to stir up nationalism and the mass media often play along, making it their task "*to engage in a constant reproduction of national identity, the protection of national interest and encouragement of ritual consumption*". Both latent and manifest nationalism in China are closely connected to the media, given that the news reported in most cases is close to the Party-line. The Chinese media (especially those outlets which are 100 per cent controlled by the CCP) draws attention to success stories about China and the Chinese, both overseas and at home, thus building a platform for nationalism.¹⁶⁰ Both cases examined in this thesis are examples of that. The World Expo as the biggest and best ever event of this kind, and the Nobel Peace Prize as an example of *they (the foreigners) do not know what they are talking about, we (China) know better*. But saying that Chinese nationalism is only a tool for the CCP is to oversimplify the situation. The feeling of nationalism in China is a result of the nation's history: "*the ways Chinese imagine their 'Century of Humiliations' at the hands of Western imperialists in the past have a powerful influence on the nature and direction of Chinese nationalism today*".¹⁶¹ The Government's reaction to the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu can be seen as an example of this. Implicit in the reaction is a feeling among the Chinese of western powers trying to insult China.

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.cfr.org/china/media-censorship-china/p11515>

¹⁶⁰ Guo, Z., Weng, H., Cheong, and Chen, H., 2007

¹⁶¹ Gries, H., P., 2004, p:19

5.7. Can the current media system continue?

An article featured in the Norwegian magazine *Kapital* explains how most media organizations around the world have gone through major changes to cut costs. However, in China the Government has increased their funding of the media by 37 billion Norwegian kroner (6.73 billion US\$). The money was given to three media organizations, *Xinhua*, *CCTV* and *People's Daily* (all 100 per cent state-controlled). The goal is to further build up China's positive profile outside the Chinese borders, and also to establish and further strengthen Chinese media in the rest of the world, particularly in countries where China has big interests.¹⁶² This is a sign of an expansion of the state-controlled media, and how important the Government regards them.

Today the media does not confront the Government and its policies to a degree where it would be a threat to the legitimacy of the authorities. If the media goes too far in a direction not sanctioned by the authorities, the Government needs only to tighten the grip or launch a political campaign. Even though the ownership structure has changed over the last decades, political freedom is still absent. However, Winfield and Peng (2006) argue that the media's financial dependency on its investors and advertisers can also be regarded as an undemocratic factor.¹⁶³ Financial dependence can lead to negative influence on the Chinese media, since catering to interest groups (advertisers and owners) could lead to loss of diversity in opinion making and objectivity. Even though the media is free from financial control by the Government, they still need to follow the rules and regulations set by the Government. Former President, Jiang Zemin, stated in an interview with an American journalist: "*Freedom of the press should be subordinate to the interest of the nation. How can you allow such freedom to damage the national interest?*"¹⁶⁴ This reflects both the Confucian and Communist view of the Government's and public's role in society.

After examining the two media cases one can see that the media has been used as a tool by the Government to promote the success of the nation, and implicitly, the success of the CCP. The reporting of the Expo showed how triumphant China was, how the event was hailed by the Chinese at home and overseas and by foreigners. The reporting of the Nobel Peace Prize showed how wrong *the others* were, 1) by infringing the Chinese judicial

¹⁶² *Kapital*, 5/2011

¹⁶³ Winfield, H., B., and Peng, Z., 2006

system and 2) by interfering in China's matters and 3) not taking into account the successful economic development of the country. The interview section of this thesis illustrates that the media has to follow regulations, that the CCP is a daily part of the job. Working in the media is equated with working for the Government, and crossing the official line may cause severe problems for the individual journalist, their families and the media organization. It can be argued that the media continues to be a promotional tool for CCP policies, as the Government needs the support of the public to legitimize their rule.

Seemingly the Chinese media workers are content working within the boundaries given by the CCP. It is seen through the interviews that they are *on the Government's side* to maintain stability. The media and the Government seem to agree that the public is not yet ripe for a free press. With this it is proven that the CCP not only controls the media through rules and regulations, but that the media are operating in a sense of *ideological hegemony*. One of the reasons that the journalists (belonging to the new middle class in China) agree with the CCP regarding the importance of maintaining status quo could be that there is too much at stake. The middle class in China stand to lose the most if a political upheaval occurs in China. The framework provided by the Government allows the middle class to further strengthen their status and economic situation, hence most journalists see the media setting in today's society as satisfying. So what could a possible future scenario for the media in China be, questioning the CCP while maintaining political stability?

5.8. A future scenario

While there are problems with western democratic ideas of the media, as was illustrated by the Murdoch affair, it cannot be denied that the western media is able to report on whatever they see fit, either for the sake of readership, advertisers or the government. Why is this seen as an ideal? The media's role from a CCP perspective is that the Government should decide what constitutes news. Both stances wish their people well, but regard the means and approaches to serve the people as principally different. In August 2010 Wen Jiabao visited Shenzhen, marking the 30th anniversary of one of China's first Special Economic Zones. He said in a speech on the importance on continuing political reform: "*China may*

¹⁶⁴ Winfield, H., B., and Peng, Z., 2006, p: 267

lose what it has already achieved through economic reform”¹⁶⁵. A possible future scenario could hold answers to how the Chinese media can develop to cater to the emerging demands from the public and the market, while at the same time respecting the Government’s policies.

Assuming Chinese society will continue developing and modernizing, local democratic processes could advance and spread throughout the country. The market would keep on growing and the middle class would become bigger, all happening without major political unrest. The media would naturally develop their role to cater to the needs of the public and the market, and evolve into a more constructive apparatus for the public. The Government would still be in a situation where they can filter the news, but if the public remains happy and the positive development continues, the Government can prove itself successful. The media would develop to question the Government, but keep supporting them in the larger picture. One can not exclude the media from being an important part of the power plays, but who knows? Perhaps China can take the best from both worlds: the open criticism of leaders and government from western ideas, and the paternalistic touch of the Chinese Government filtering out the unimportant news we increasingly see in the West every day. Maybe then the Chinese media might be accepted as a legitimate institution in the eyes of the West?

5.9. Summing up

There is no doubt that the media in all societies are of great importance for the character of societal development. They have the power to influence large numbers of people. With the internet, information is increasingly available at all times. In China there are today more than 457 million internet users, and there is a flourishing internet community in which more and more people are taking an active part. The media in China is difficult to categorize, fitting neither in the western theories based on liberal-democratic thought nor in communist ones, based on the former Soviet Union. China *is* special, with policies originating from a communist political system, but increasingly shaped by market economy and capitalist inspired ideas. During the early years after 1949 the media was indeed working solely for the CCP, but with the reforms, its role changed. The Chinese

¹⁶⁵ The Economist, November 2010, p: 67

Government is still trying to find suitable strategies for the media that would balance the development of the market with the need for the Government to maintain control. China is influenced by Confucianism as well as Communism, and in Confucianism, stability is important and the hierarchical view of society is central. Concerned with keeping Chinese society stable, the CCP seems to believe that the people are not yet ready for a free press. Interestingly, this was also a central point mentioned by the interviewed media employees (cfr. Section 4.2 - Interviews). The Chinese media is controlled through Government channels, and the internet is monitored by government agencies. However, the media in China is expanding and diversifying, both national and internationally. Western influence can be observed both on TV programs and in reporting styles. Also, the financial gains are becoming increasingly important for advertisers and owners. Therefore, one has to agree that there are many agenda setters in the Chinese media sector, much like in the case of the western media.

6: CONCLUSION

Who does the media actually serve in China and who should they serve? Who holds the most power over the process of news reporting - the Government, the market or the public? The public's good and interests are not necessarily the same as those of the market, and what benefits is in the interest of the market may not be so for the Government. The media in China has gone through several changes since the Communist Party took power in 1949. From solely serving the party and acting as the CCP *mouth piece* informing and indoctrinating the masses, it has evolved into a much more complex apparatus trying to keep up with the pace of socio-economic changes occurring in China (and in the rest of the world). The most important factor of alteration is the change in ownership structures and the emergence of advertising that came along with Deng Xiaoping's 1978 economic reform process. The increased number of voices as well as interests had a profound impact over the direct control the Government previously possessed over media. The advertisers were specifically interested in readership and the private owners in increasing income. The media was in a position where they could allow themselves to be more critical of some aspects of the society, such as in financial reporting.

However, the aspect of political reporting has changed little, with the current Government, like in the past, fearing the danger of a free press. In spite of the internet and the increasing number of news-based websites, the Government remains in strict control over the political content that could pose harm to the Party. This is illustrated by the two media cases (World Expo and Nobel Peace Prize). It is intriguing to see how the interviews with Chinese individuals working in the media prove that journalists agree with the CCP to some extent. They actually see it as correct not to report on topics that could possibly cause political upheaval and unrest. Stability is seen as important by both the Government and the media, and this is of course also in the interest of the owners and advertisers. It seems that they agree on the opinion that the public is not yet ready to deal with a free press. On the other hand, the public remains excluded, without being given a say in what is important to them, what they should know and what they are better off not knowing. The media tries to challenge and question what they see as unjust within the frames they are operating in. In the West, however, the media is in most cases working separately from the government and is therefore in a freer position to report on critical topics. Therefore they are in a

position where they can “*speak truth*” to the government on behalf of groups in the society that oppose some government policies.

It is important to remember that the media in China is working within the framework of a communist political setting where the main task of the media is actually to serve and support the government. However, since the Chinese system is historically unique, there is as yet no fixed truth as to what the media’s role should be. Some would say the current system serves its purpose, and that the Chinese system has proven itself quite successful in improving people’s standard of living in economic terms. According to the empirical data presented in this thesis, it is fair to state that most Chinese are satisfied with the existing system, including the media. Behind this impression it is also clear that there is considerable diversity in terms of how socio-economic groups relate to the media. Yet, one can raise the question whether suppressed groups in western society receive more support from media than the media in China gives to similarly unheard voices. There is a tendency of the Chinese media to increase their reporting on the causes of suppressed groups and minorities (e.g. migrant workers in Guangdong province).

The media is likely to continue to develop its role to challenge the status quo, and with the internet the Government will continue to be challenged by the public for information. The media in the West (cfr. The Murdoch affair summer 2011¹⁶⁶) may have been given too much leverage and power, so that they can operate with their own rules with less respect for the public and/or the government. It is understandable that the Chinese Government would not like to see such media practices applied on Chinese soil. Instead, there is likely to be a continued development of a “*media model with Chinese characteristics*” aiming at a harmonious balance between the needs of the Government, the market and the public.

¹⁶⁶ http://articles.cnn.com/2011-07-10/world/uk.phonehacking_1_andy-coulson-news-international-ed-miliband?_s=PM:WORLD

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7.1. Acronyms

BIE – International Exhibitions Bureau

CCP – China Communist Party

CCTV – China Central Television

CETV – China Entertainment Television

CNN – Cable News Network

CPC – Communist Party of China

EXPO – Expositions

GAPP – General Administration of Press and Publication

N/A – Not applicable

PRC – People's Republic of China

WTO – World Trade Organization

SARFT: State Administration of Radio, Film and Television

SME – Small Medium Enterprises

SMG – Shanghai Media Group

SOE – State Owned Enterprises

UN – United Nations

US – United States